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**Venugopal et al.**

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(54) **INTERCONNECT VIA WITH GROWN GRAPHITIC MATERIAL**

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(71) Applicant: **TEXAS INSTRUMENTS INCORPORATED**, Dallas, TX (US)

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(72) Inventors: **Archana Venugopal**, Dallas, TX (US);  
**Benjamin Stassen Cook**, Rockwall, TX (US);  
**Luigi Colombo**, Dallas, TX (US);  
**Robert Reid Doering**, Garland, TX (US)

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(73) Assignee: **TEXAS INSTRUMENTS INCORPORATED**, Dallas, TX (US)

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(\*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 0 days.

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(74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm* — Andrew R. Ralston; Charles A. Brill; Frank D. Cimino

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(51) **Int. Cl.**  
**H01L 23/528** (2006.01)  
**H01L 23/522** (2006.01)  
(Continued)

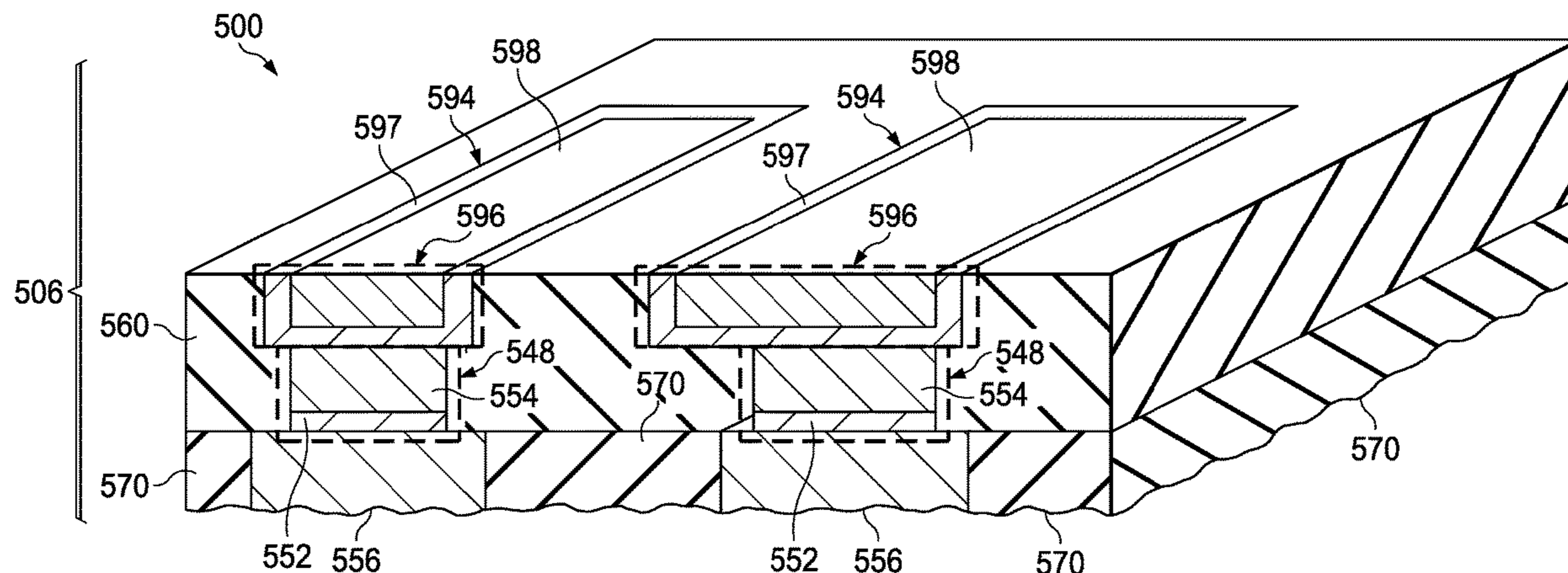
(57) **ABSTRACT**

An integrated circuit has a substrate and an interconnect region disposed on the substrate. The interconnect region includes a plurality of interconnect levels. Each interconnect level includes interconnects in dielectric material. The integrated circuit includes a graphitic via in the interconnect region. The graphitic via vertically connects a first interconnect in a first interconnect level to a second interconnect in a second, higher, interconnect level. The graphitic via includes a cohered nanoparticle film of nanoparticles in which adjacent nanoparticles cohere to each other, and a layer of graphitic material disposed on the cohered nanoparticle film. The nanoparticles include one or more metals suitable for catalysis of the graphitic material. The cohered nanoparticle film is formed by a method which includes an additive process. The graphitic via is electrically coupled to an active component of the integrated circuit.

(52) **U.S. Cl.**  
CPC ..... **H01L 23/528** (2013.01); **H01L 21/288** (2013.01); **H01L 21/28556** (2013.01);  
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(58) **Field of Classification Search**  
CPC ..... H01L 21/76876; H01L 21/76879; H01L 21/76885; H01L 21/76895;  
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**20 Claims, 20 Drawing Sheets**





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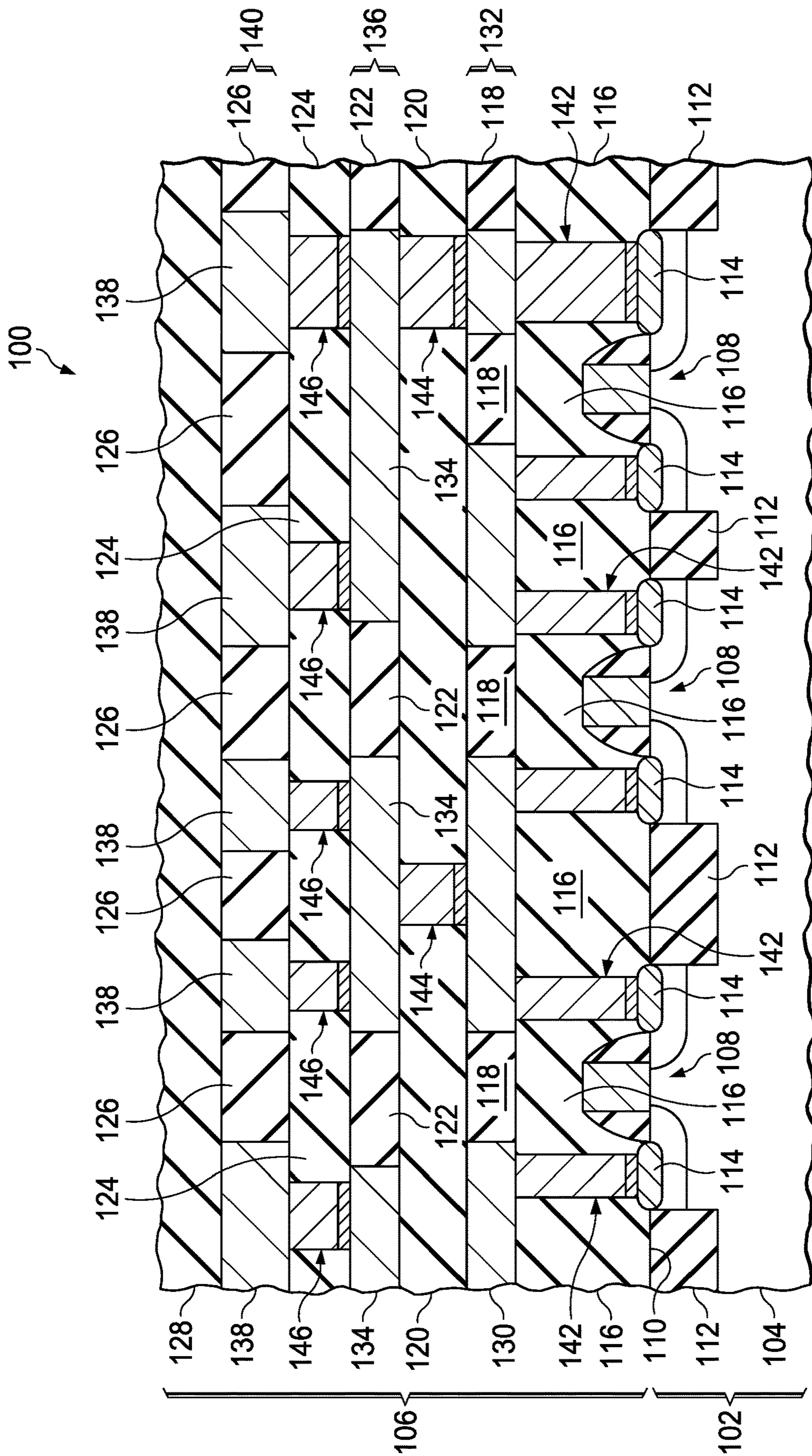
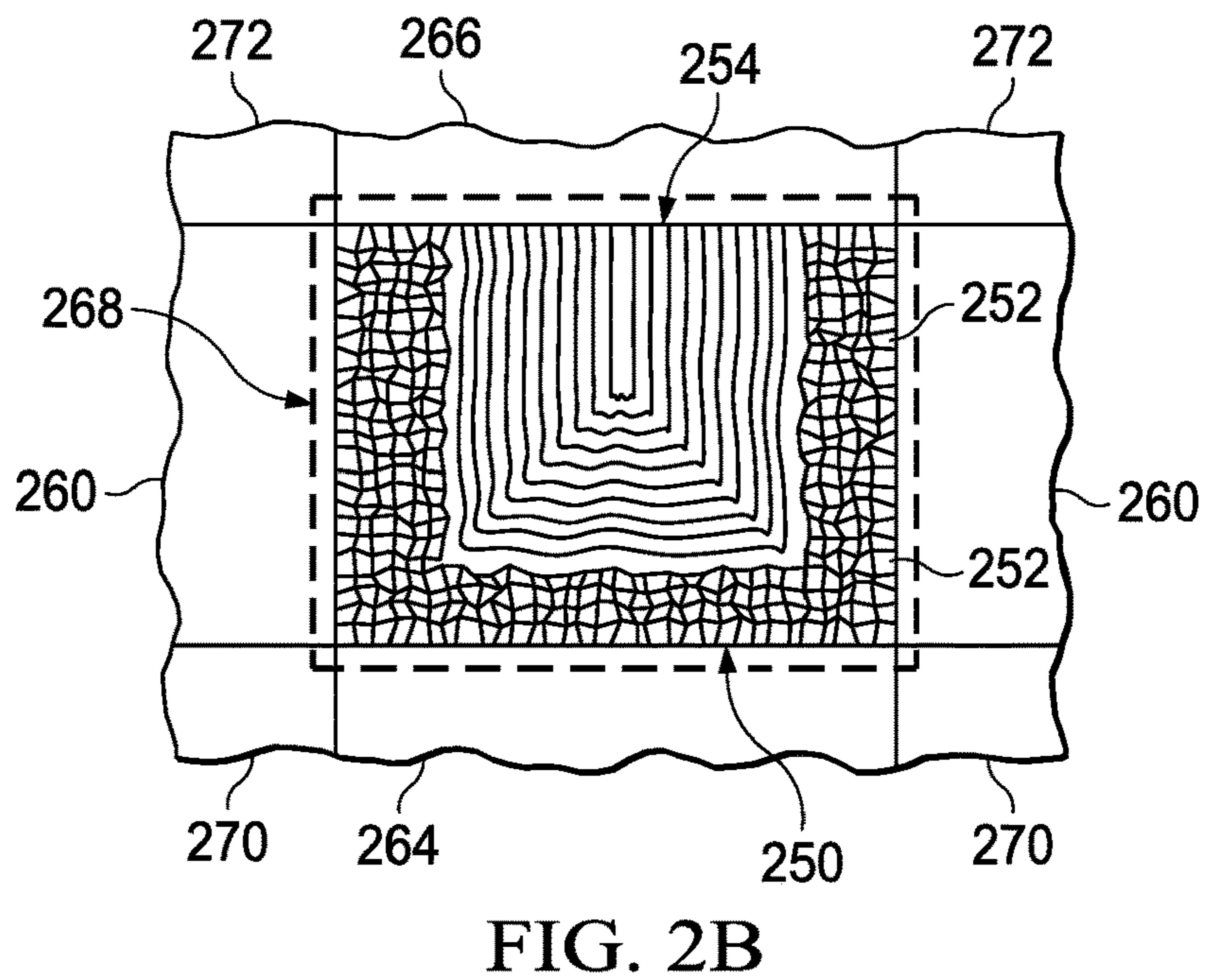
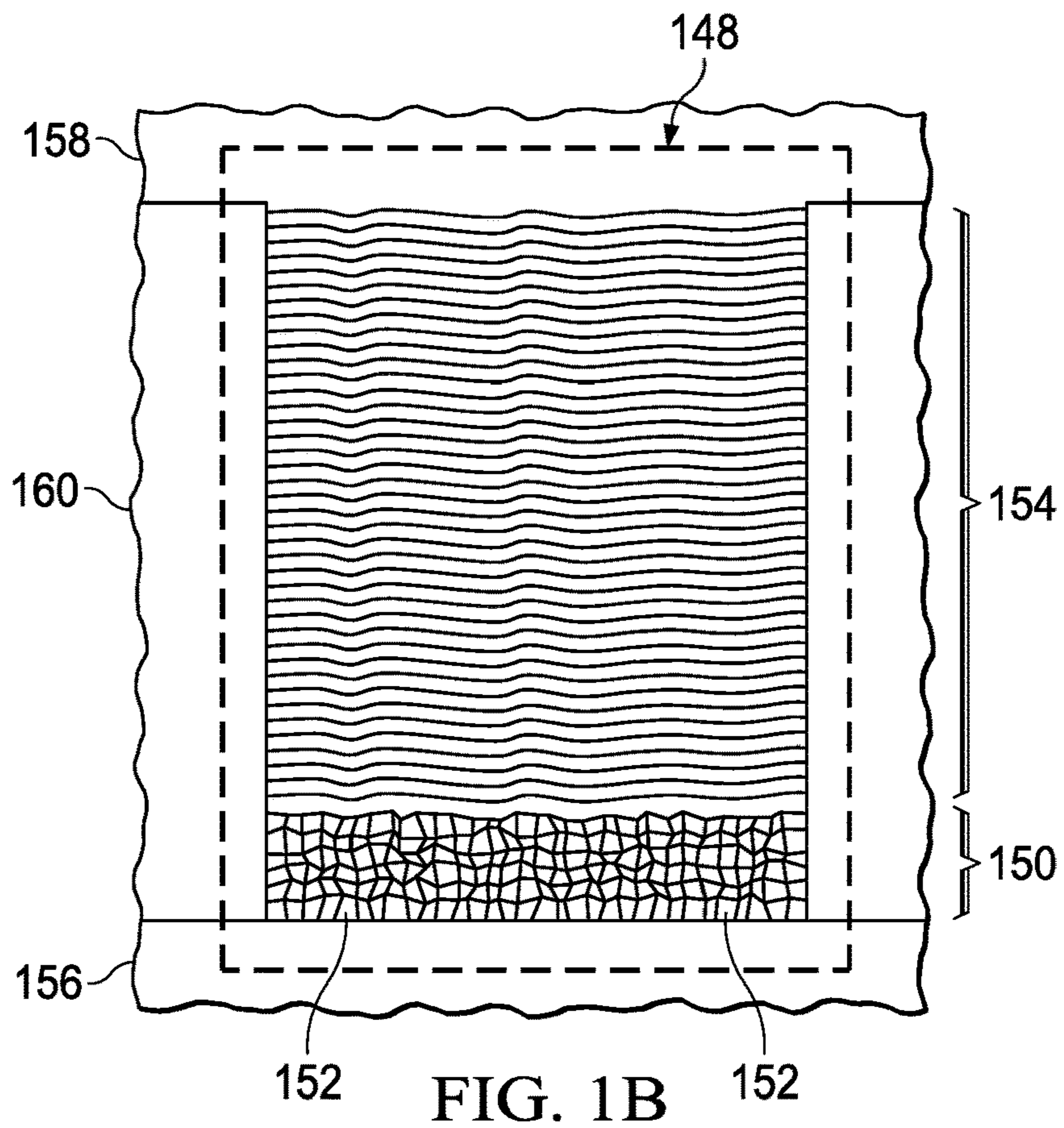
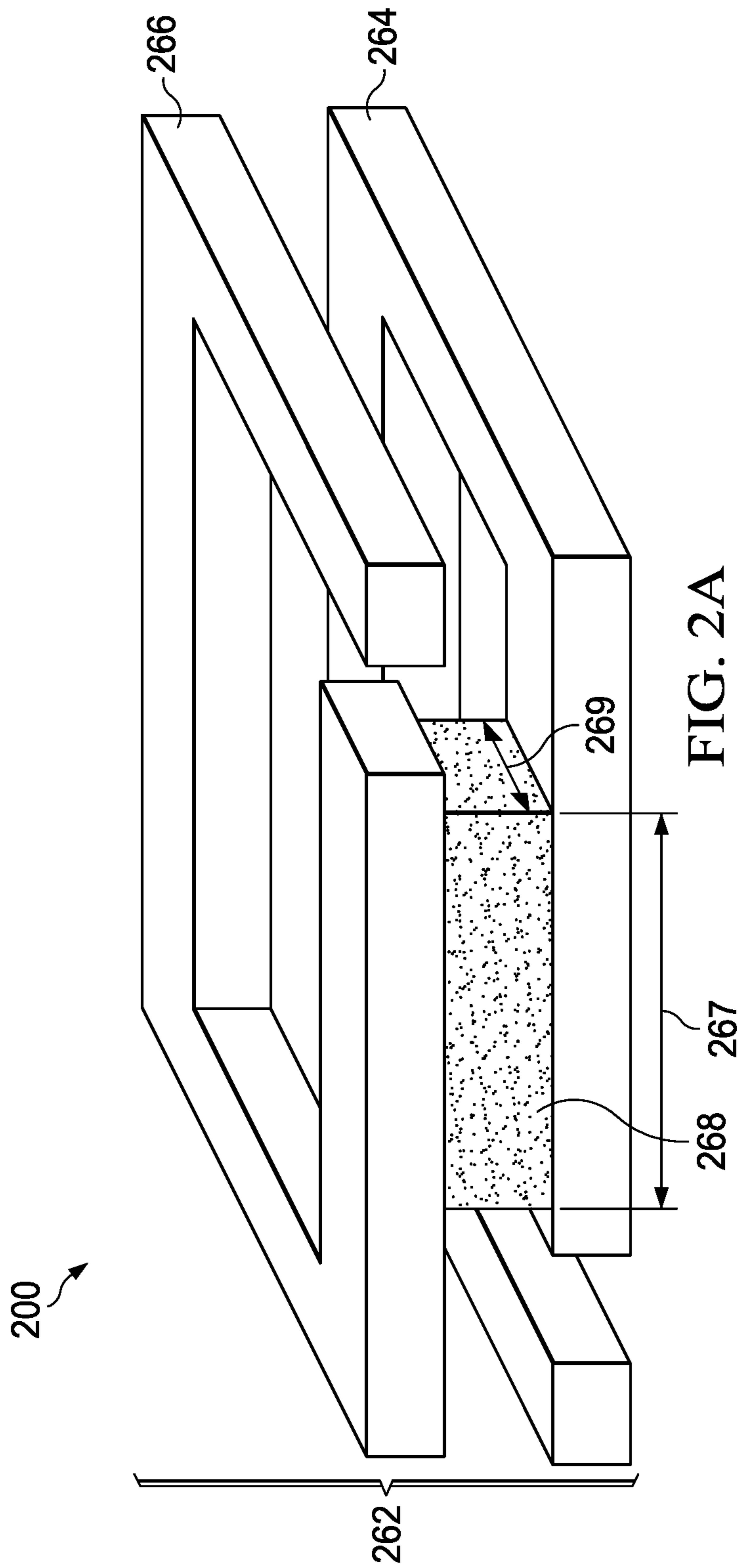


FIG. 1A







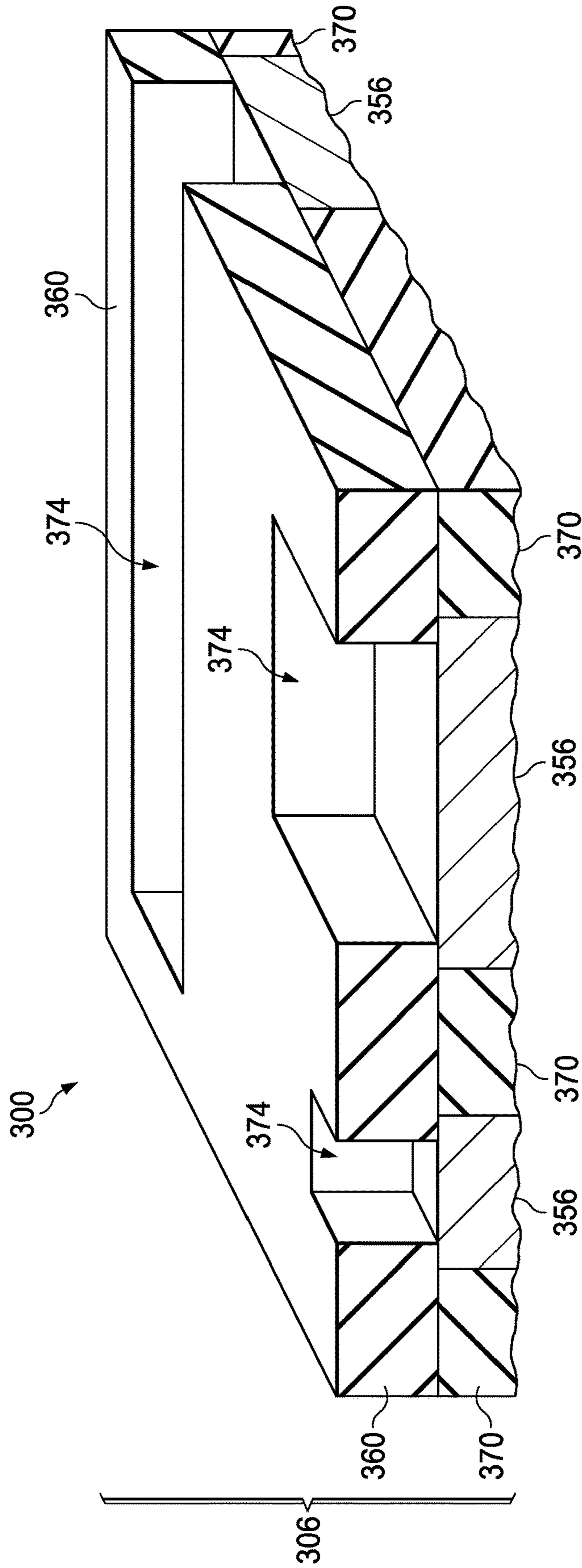


FIG. 3A

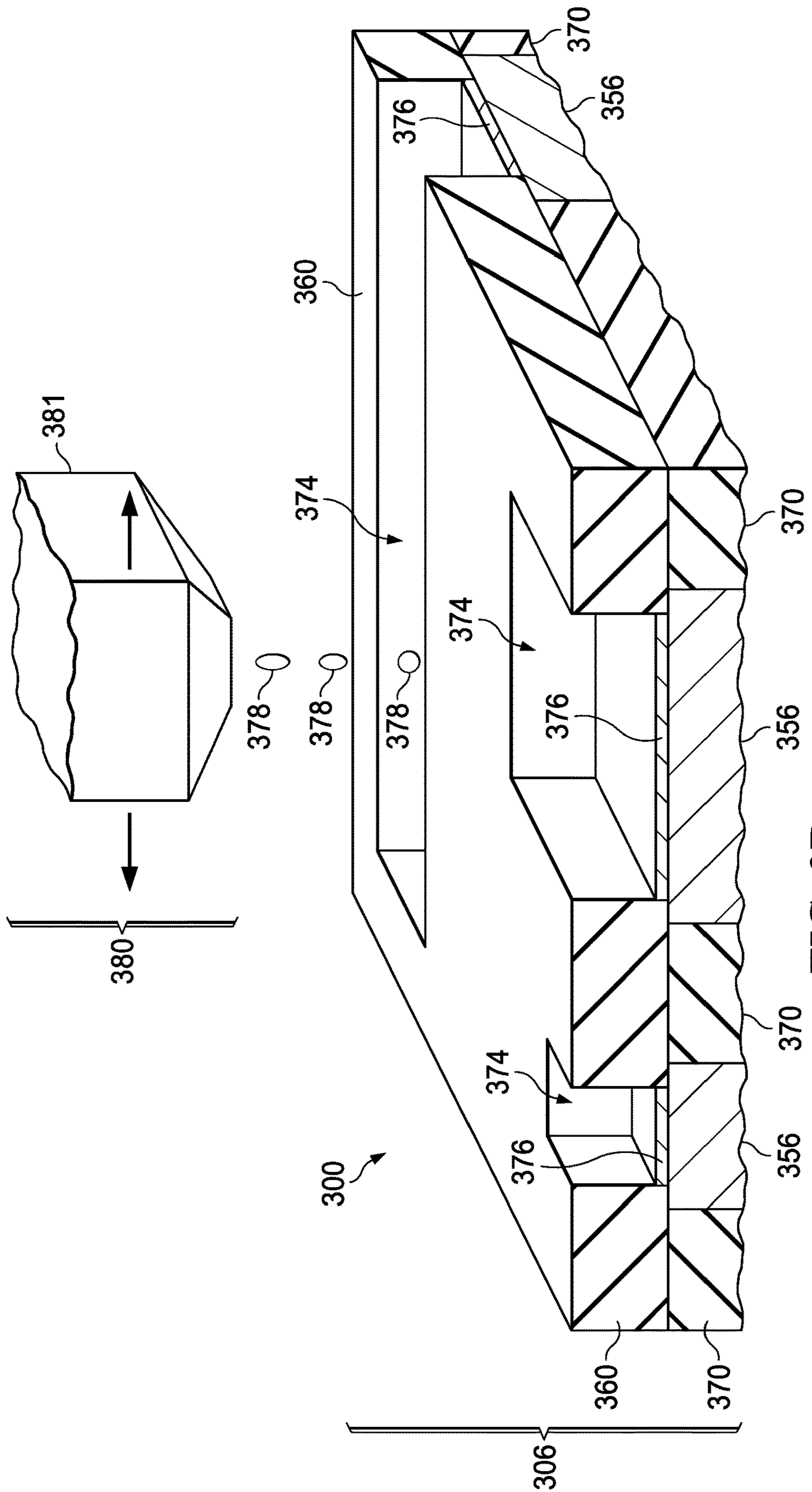


FIG. 3B



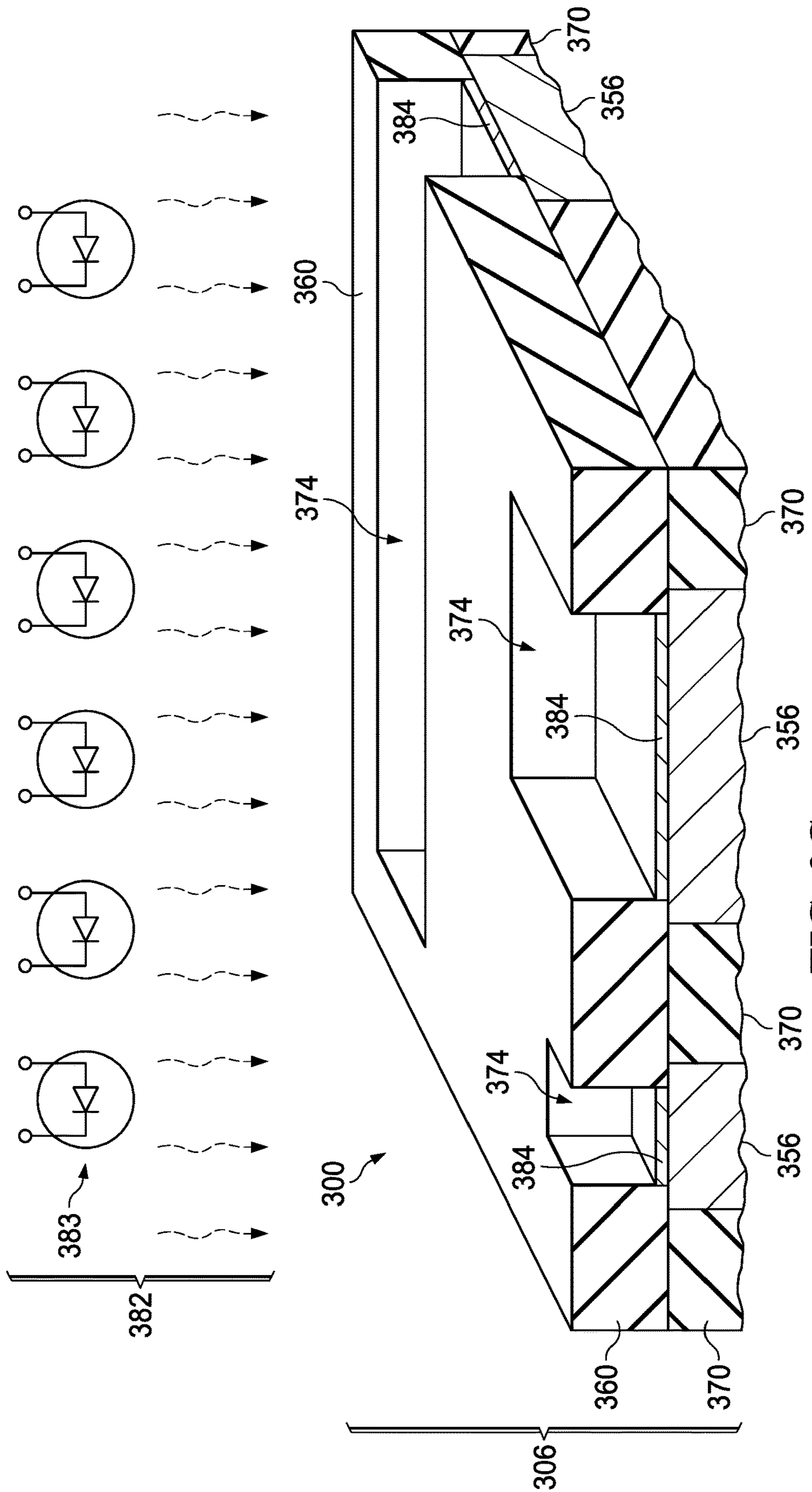


FIG. 3C

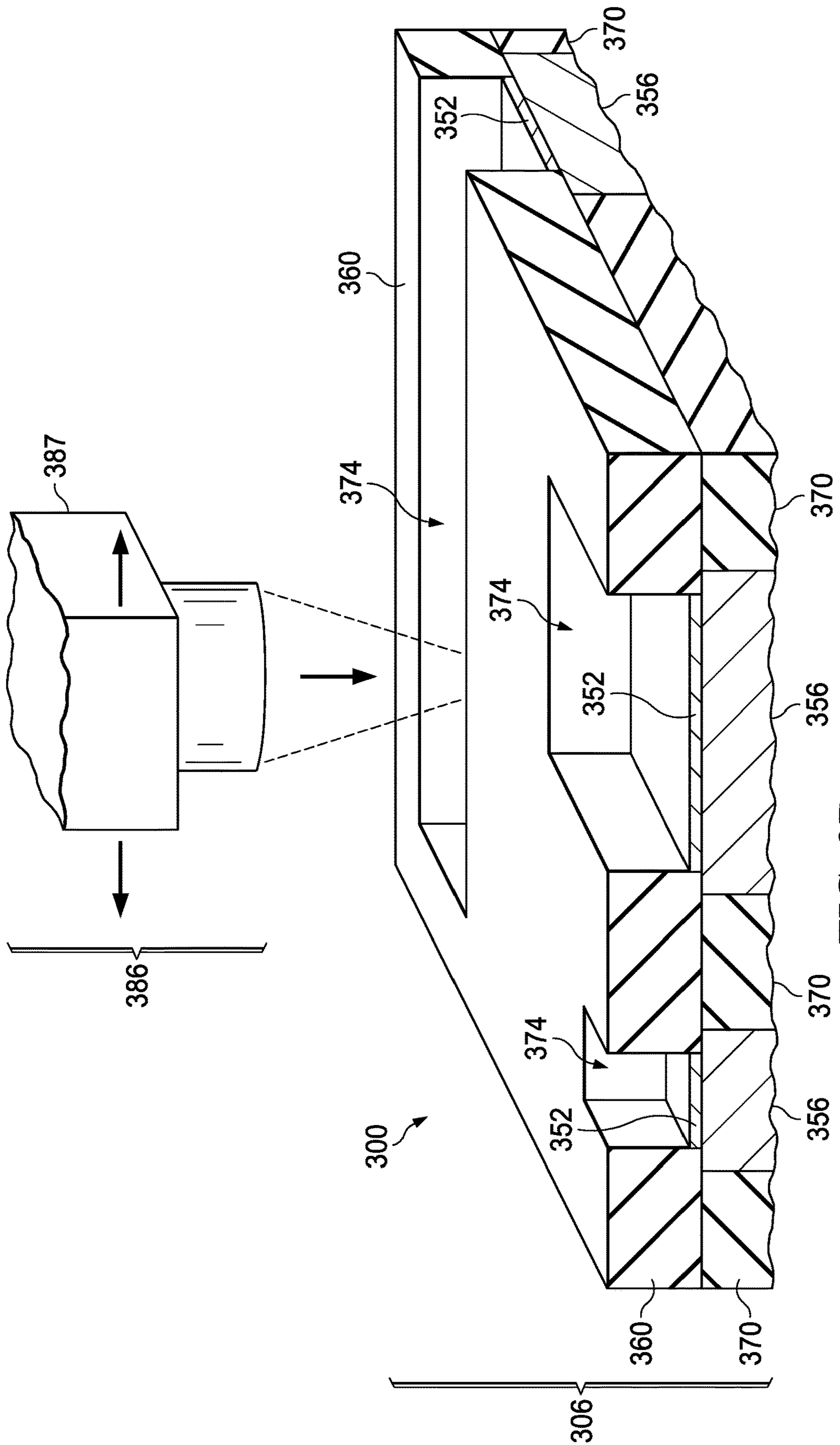


FIG. 3D

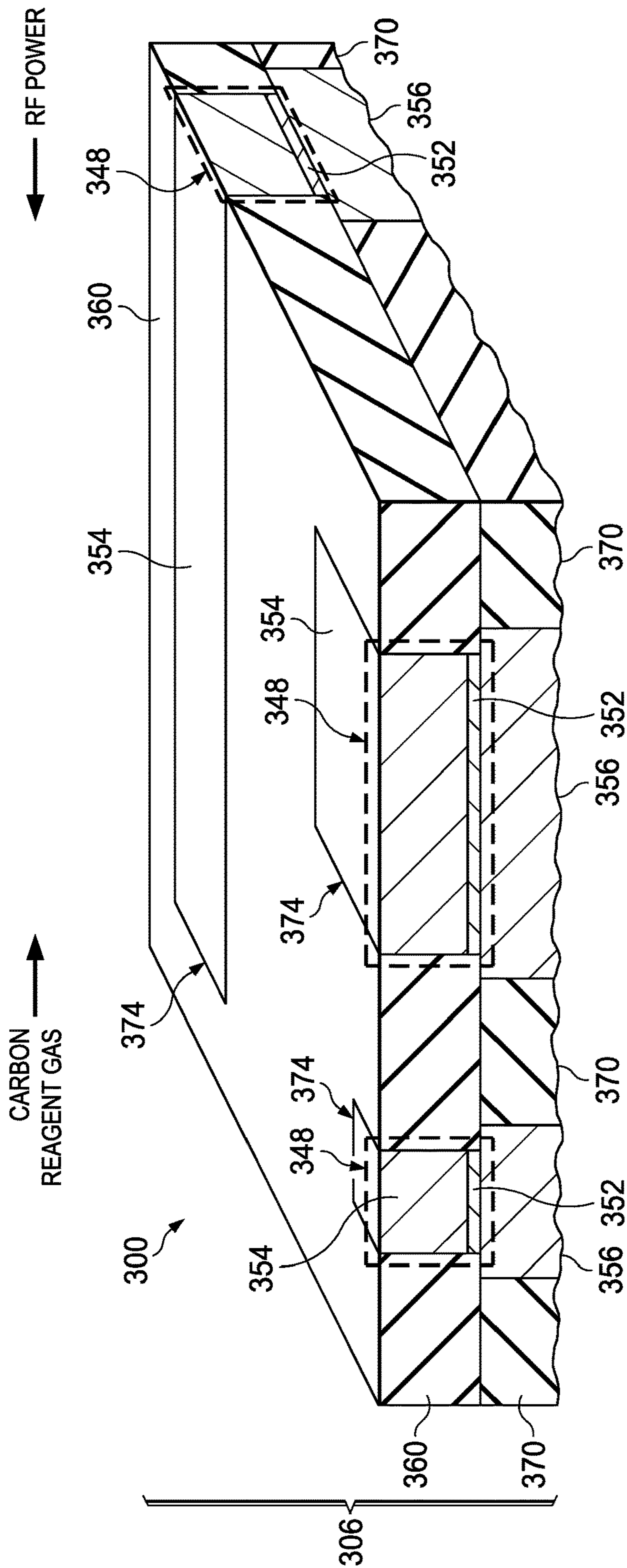


FIG. 3E



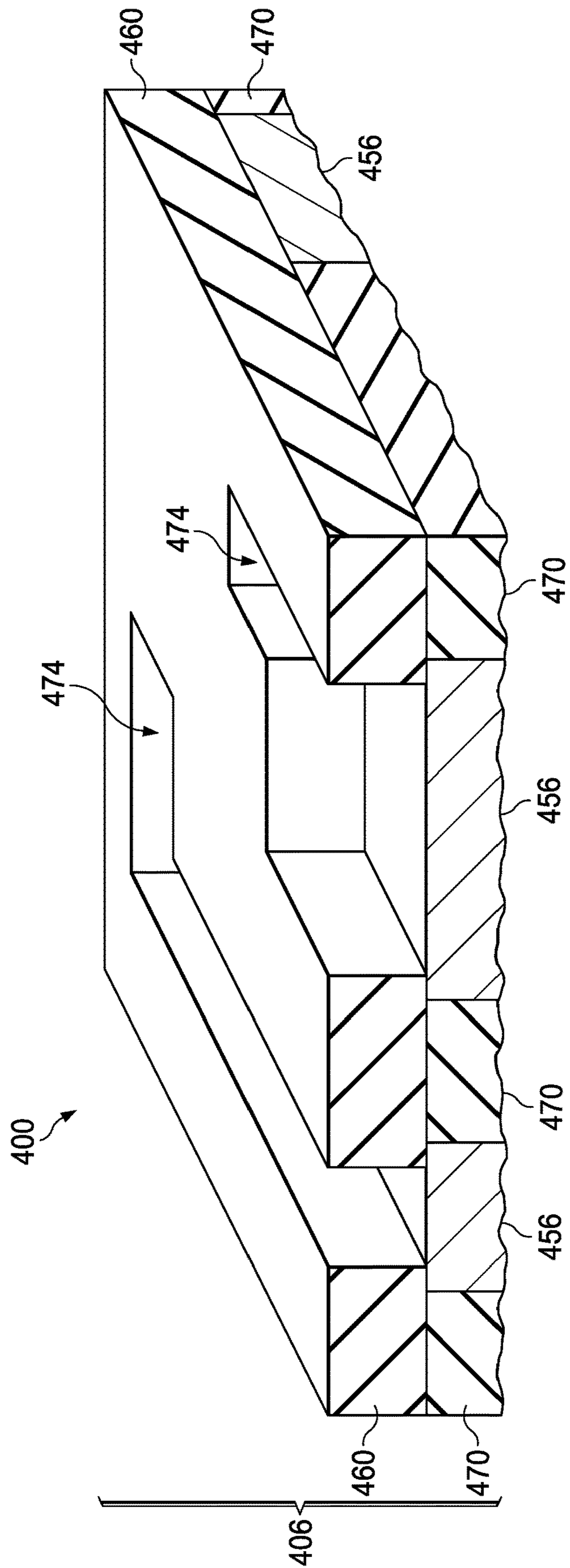


FIG. 4A

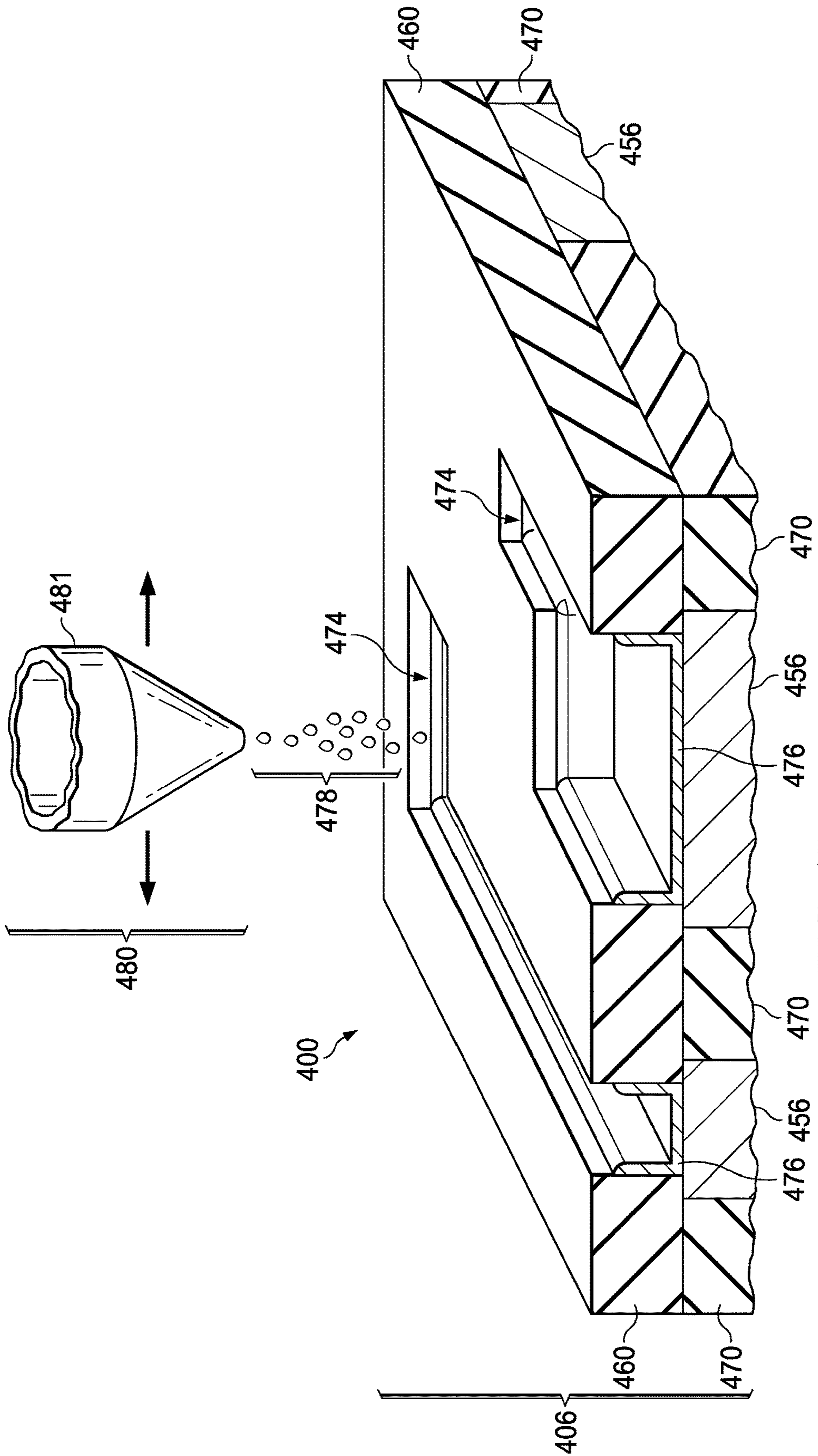


FIG. 4B

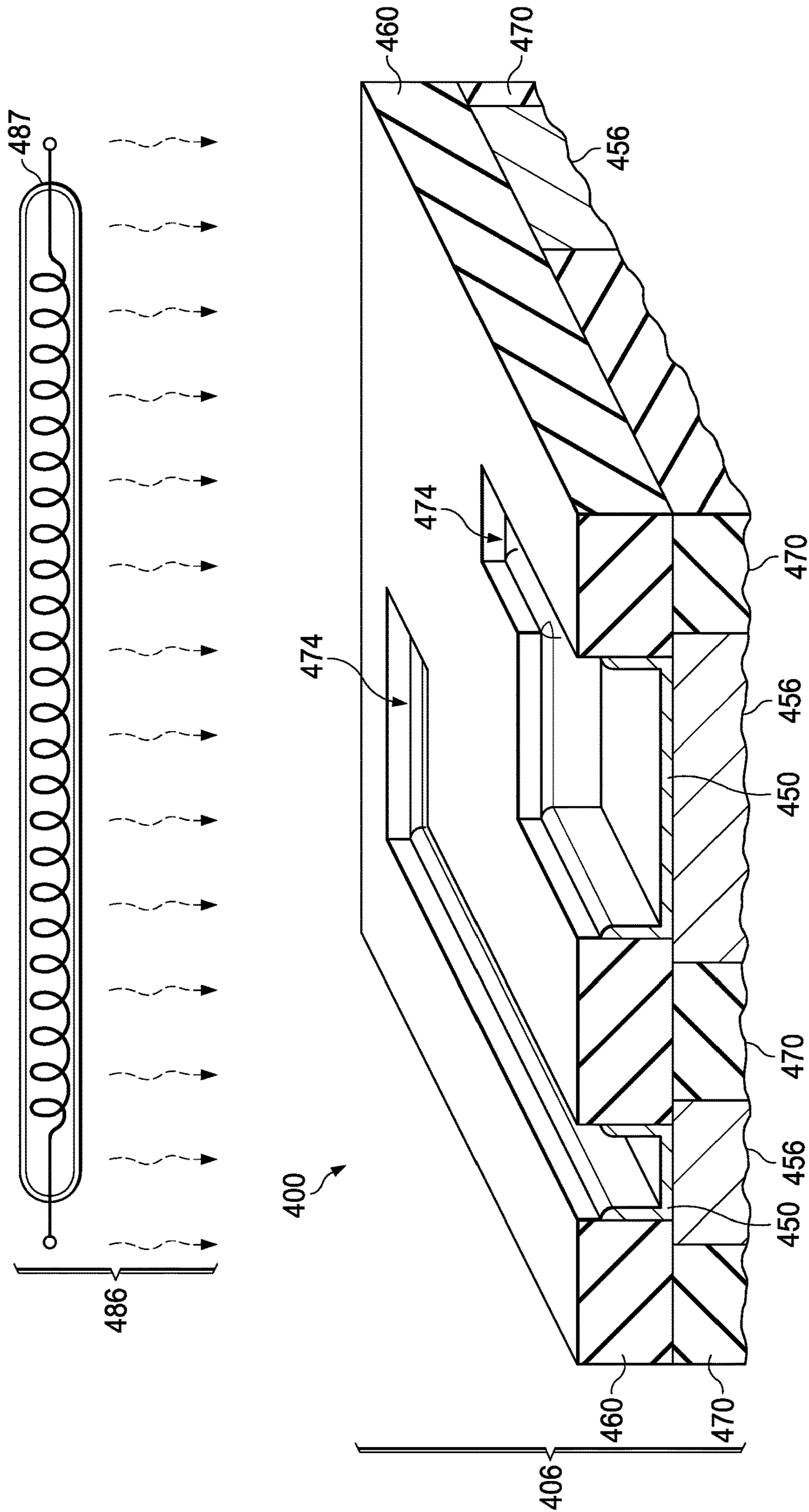


FIG. 4C



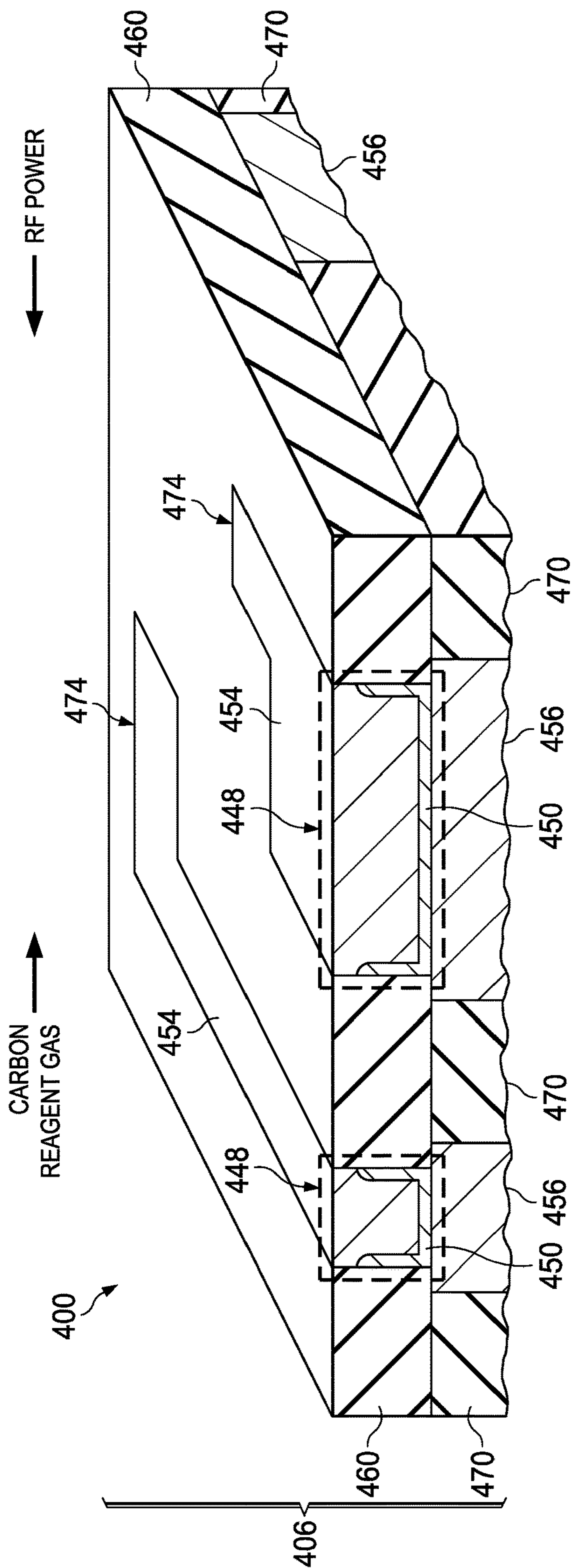
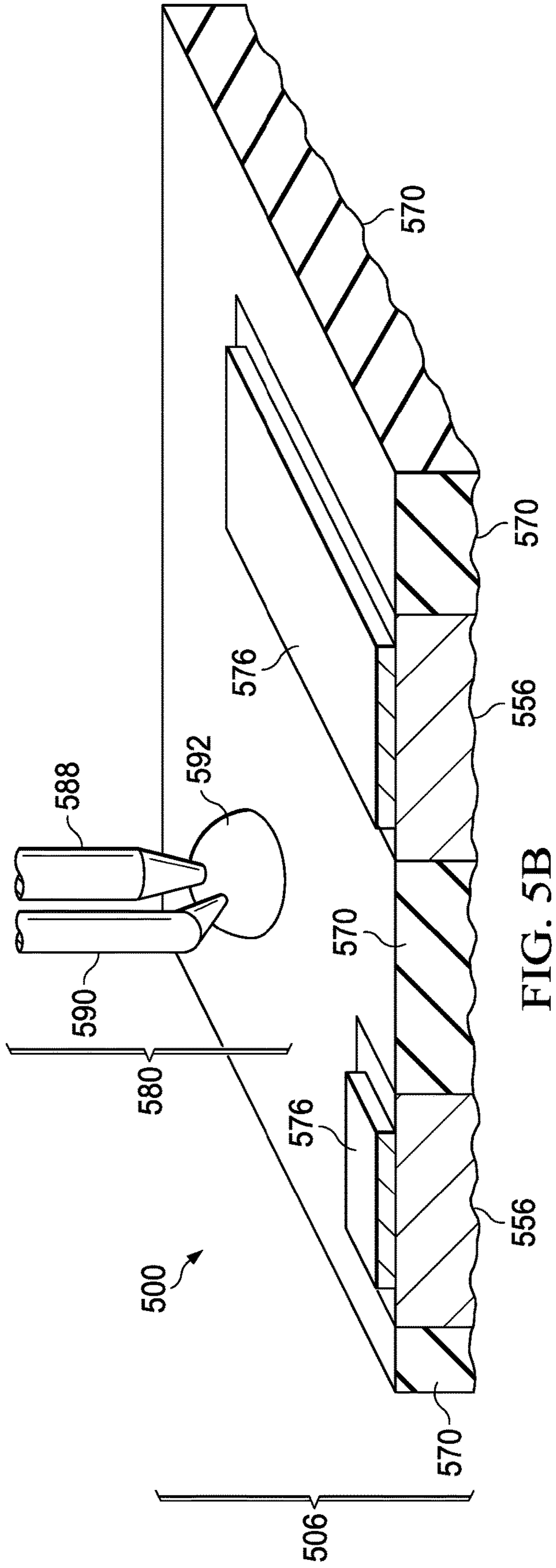
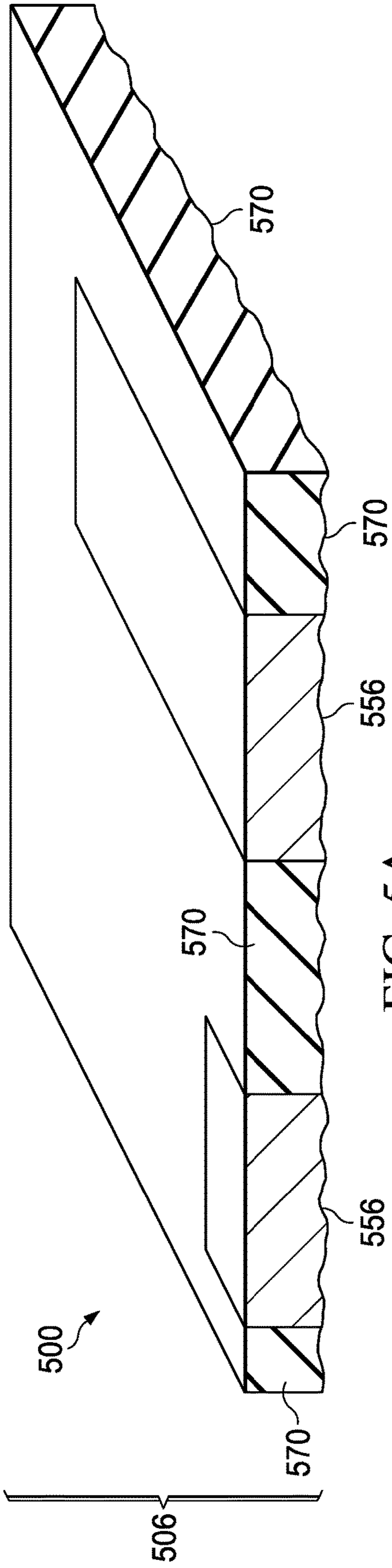


FIG. 4D



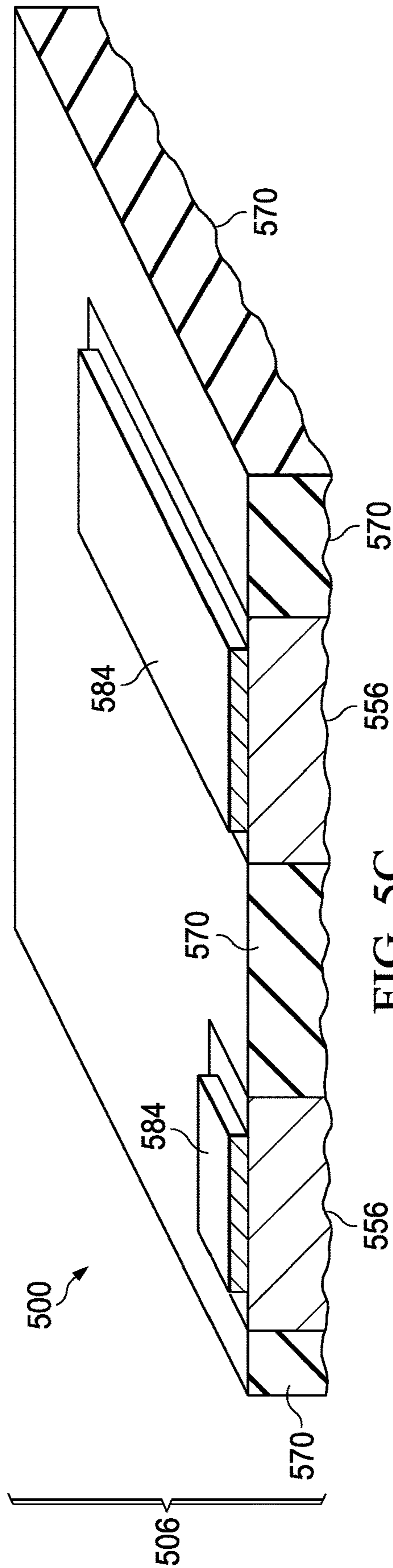
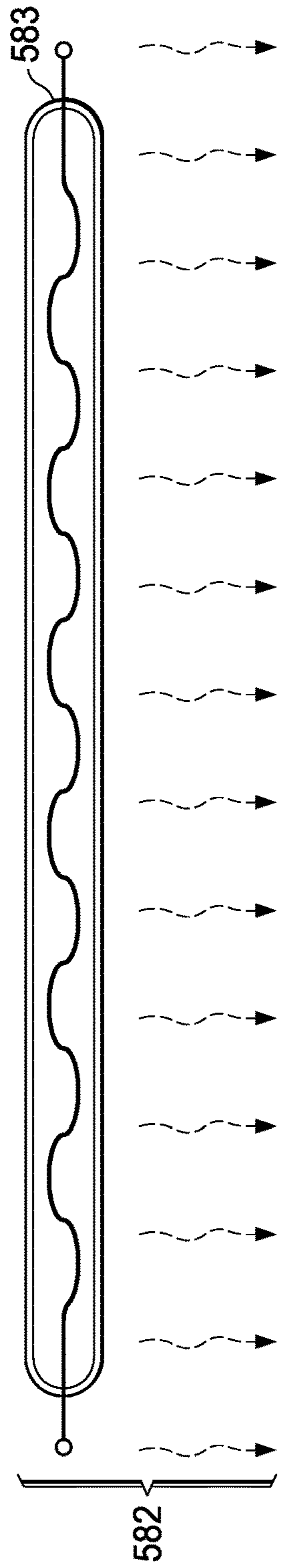


FIG. 5C



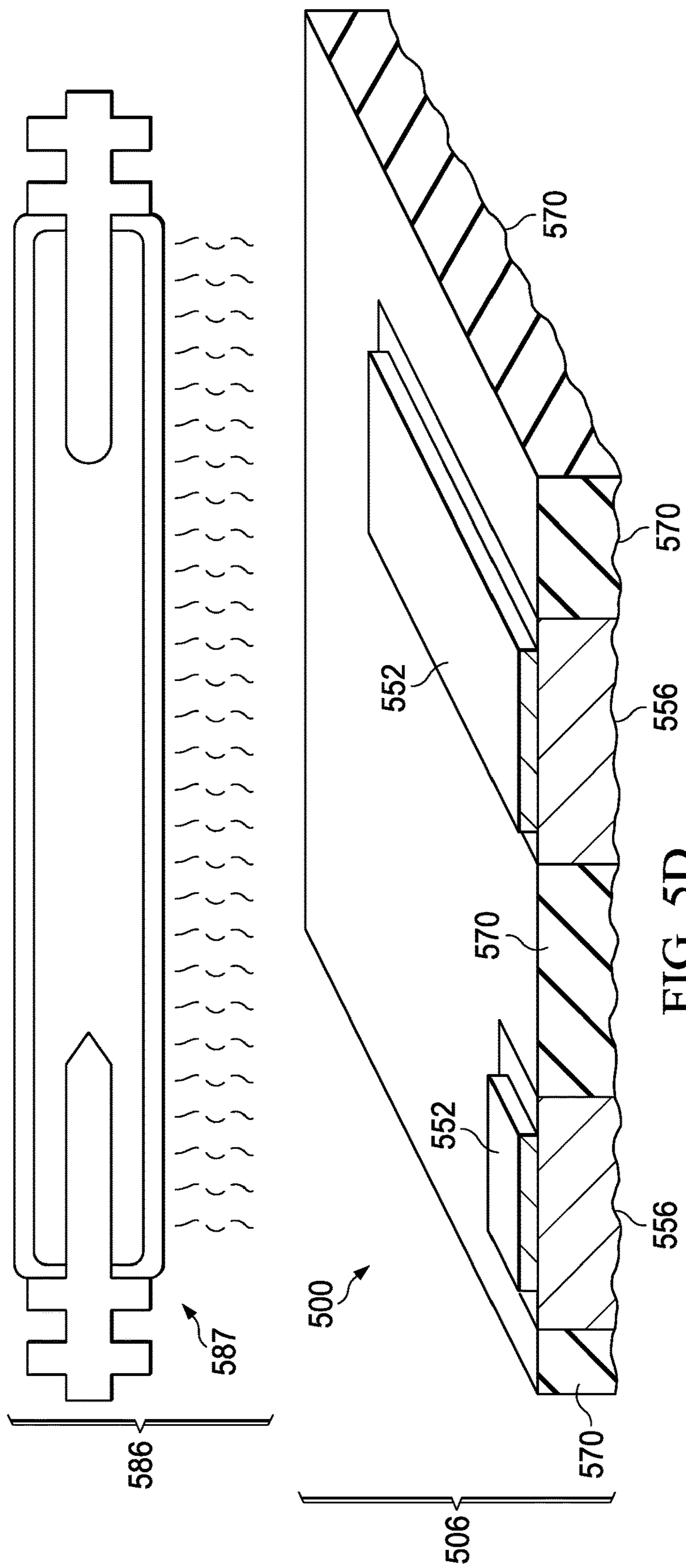


FIG. 5D

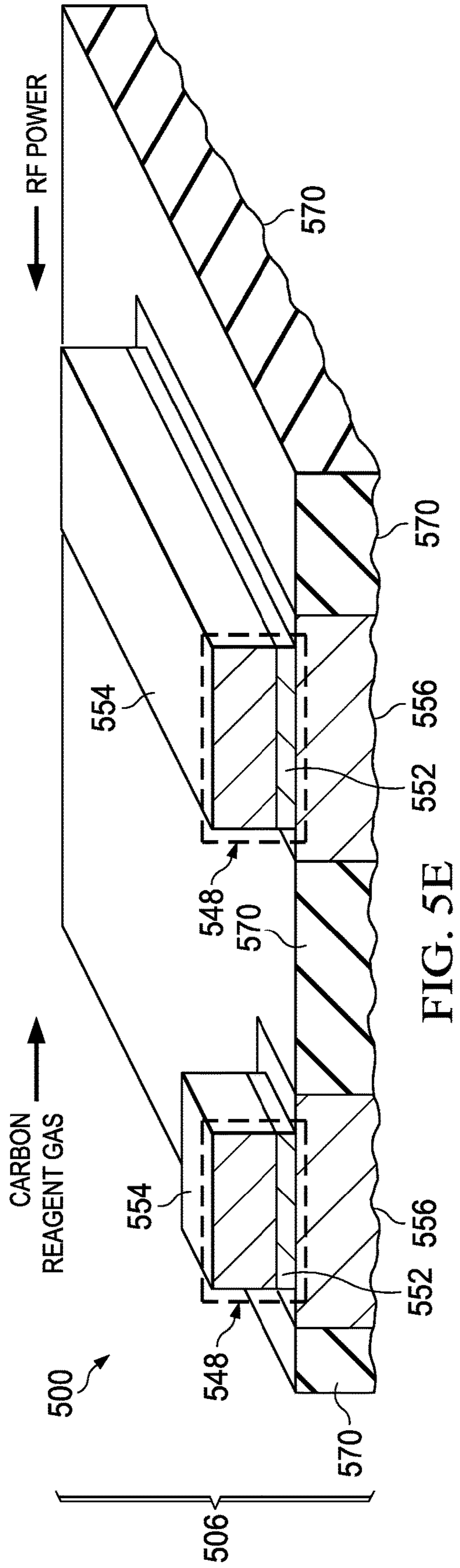


FIG. 5E

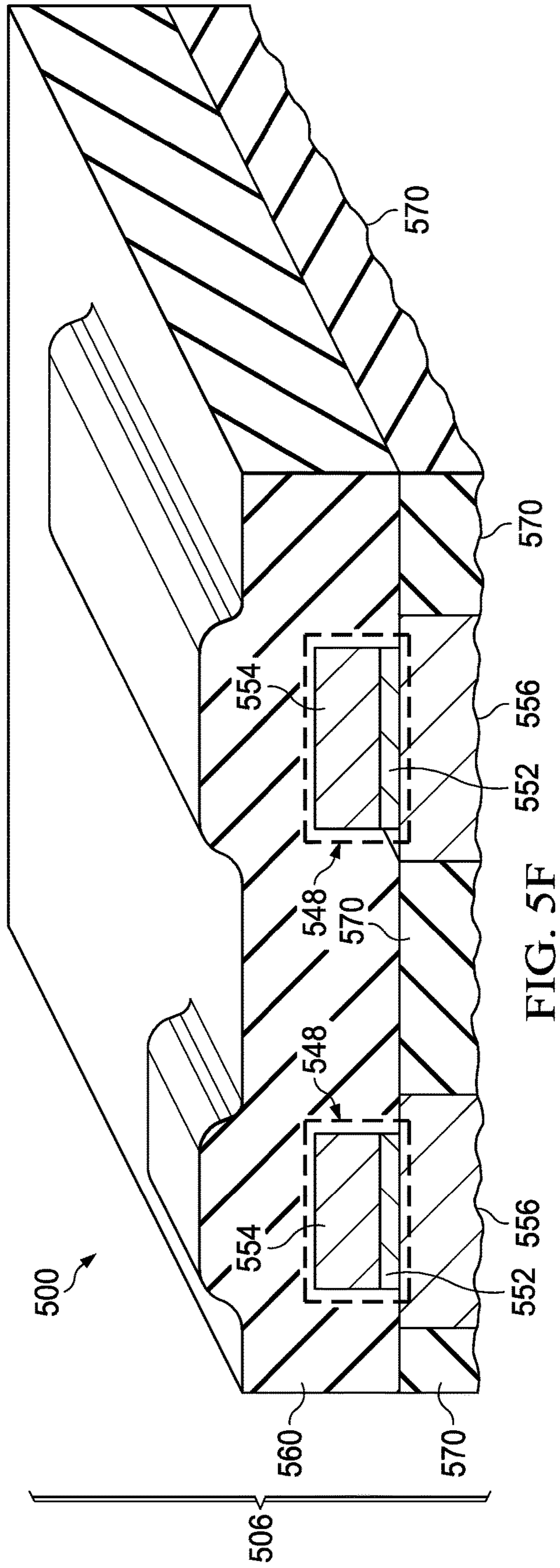


FIG. 5F

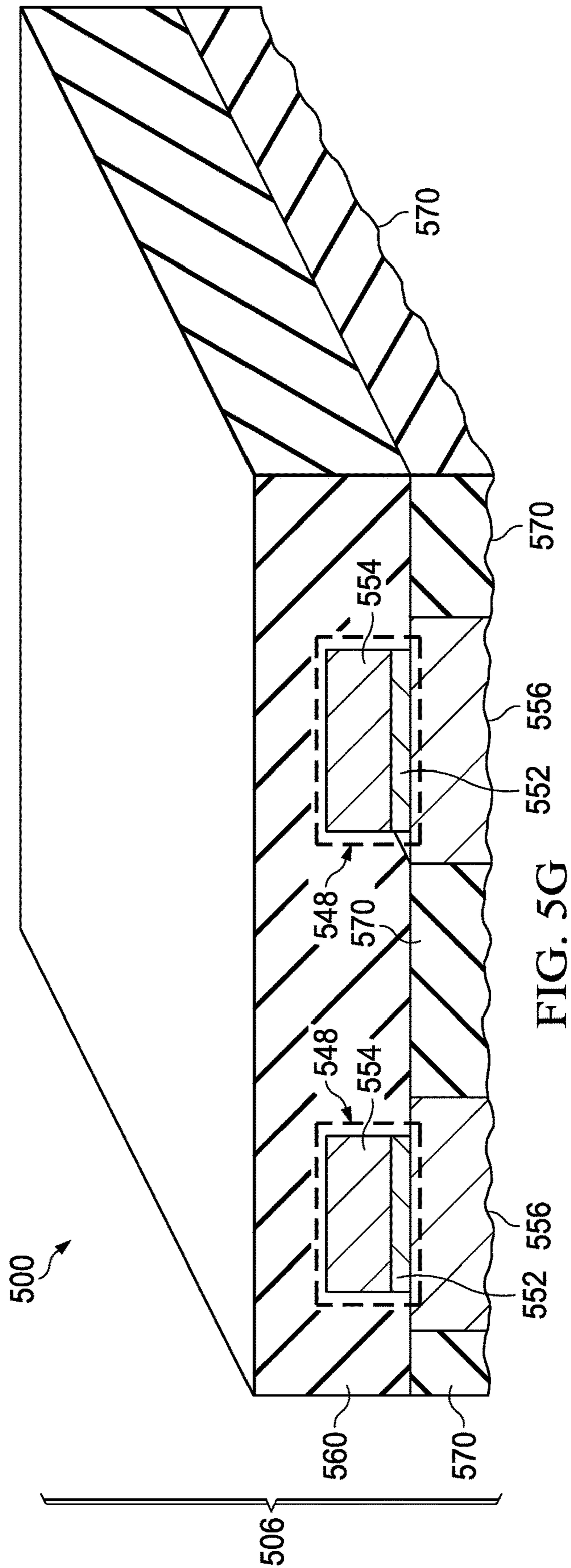


FIG. 5G



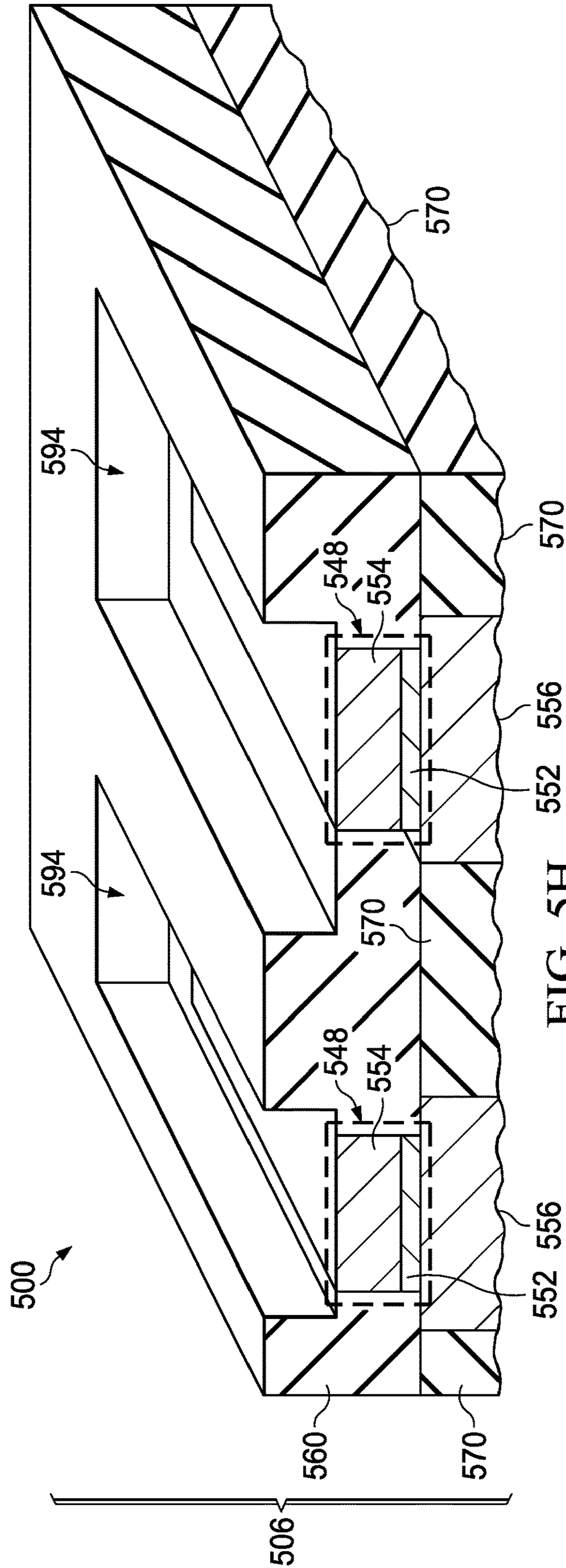


FIG. 5H

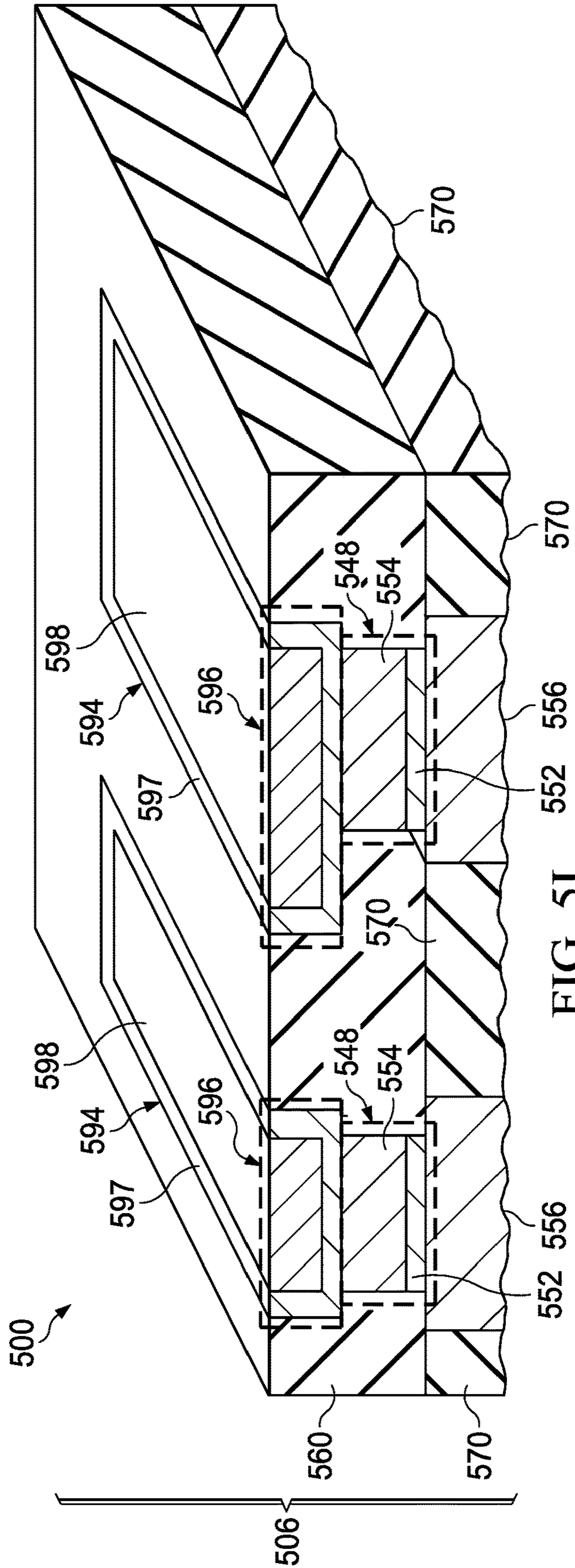


FIG. 5I





**1****INTERCONNECT VIA WITH GROWN GRAPHITIC MATERIAL**

## FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present disclosure relates to the field of integrated circuits. More particularly, the disclosure relates to thermal management in integrated circuits.

## BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Integrated circuits typically include vias in interconnect regions which vertically connect metal lines. During operation of the integrated circuit, high current levels are sometimes produced which degrade reliability of the vias, for example, by electromigration and/or ohmic heating processes. Tungsten vias often have voids which reduce reliability. Copper vias are susceptible to stress migration, leading to reduced reliability. Producing reliable vias while maintaining desired fabrication costs has been problematic.

## SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The following presents a simplified summary in order to provide a basic understanding of one or more aspects of the current disclosure. This summary is not an extensive overview of the disclosure, and is neither intended to identify key or critical elements of the disclosure, nor to delineate the scope thereof. Rather, the primary purpose of the summary is to present some concepts of the disclosure in a simplified form as a prelude to a more detailed description that is presented later.

A method of forming an integrated circuit includes forming first and second dielectric layers over a semiconductor substrate. A first metal interconnect line is formed within a first dielectric layer located over the substrate, and a second metal interconnect line is formed within a second dielectric layer located over the substrate. A conductive via including a graphitic material is formed within a third dielectric layer between the first and second dielectric layers, the conductive via connecting the first and second metal interconnect lines. A nanoparticle film is located between the graphitic material and the first metal interconnect line and between the graphitic material and the third dielectric layer.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE VIEWS OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1A and FIG. 1B are cross sections of an example integrated circuit containing graphitic vias according to an embodiment of the invention.

FIG. 2A and FIG. 2B are cross sections of another example integrated circuit containing a graphitic via according to an embodiment of the invention.

FIG. 3A through FIG. 3E depict an example method of forming an integrated circuit with graphitic vias according to an embodiment of the invention.

FIG. 4A through FIG. 4D depict another example method of forming an integrated circuit with graphitic vias according to an embodiment of the invention.

FIG. 5A through FIG. 5I depict a further example method of forming an integrated circuit with graphitic vias according to an embodiment of the invention.

FIG. 6 is a cross section of an example integrated circuit which includes a combined thermal routing structure according to an embodiment of the invention.

**2****DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF EXAMPLE EMBODIMENTS**

The present disclosure is described with reference to the attached figures. The figures are not drawn to scale and they are provided merely to illustrate the disclosure. Several aspects of the disclosure are described below with reference to example applications for illustration. It should be understood that numerous specific details, relationships, and methods are set forth to provide an understanding of the disclosure. One skilled in the relevant art, however, will readily recognize that the disclosure can be practiced without one or more of the specific details or with other methods. In other instances, well-known structures or operations are not shown in detail to avoid obscuring the disclosure. The present disclosure is not limited by the illustrated ordering of acts or events, as some acts may occur in different orders and/or concurrently with other acts or events. Furthermore, not all illustrated acts or events are required to implement a methodology in accordance with the present disclosure.

The following co-pending patent applications are related and hereby incorporated by reference: U.S. patent application Ser. No. 15/361,390, U.S. patent application Ser. No. 15/361,394, U.S. patent application Ser. No. 15/361,397, U.S. patent application Ser. No. 15/361,399, U.S. patent application Ser. No. 15/361,403, all filed simultaneously with this application. With their mention in this section, these patent applications are not admitted to be prior art with respect to the present invention.

Terms such as “top,” “bottom,” “front,” “back,” “over,” “above,” “under,” “below,” and such, may be used in this disclosure. These terms should not be construed as limiting the position or orientation of a structure or element, but should be used to provide spatial relationship between structures or elements.

For the purposes of this disclosure, the term “lateral” is understood to refer to a direction parallel to a plane of an instant top surface of the integrated circuit, and the term “vertical” is understood to refer to a direction perpendicular to the plane of the instant top surface of the integrated circuit.

For the purposes of this disclosure, the term “instant top surface” of an integrated circuit is understood to refer to the top surface of the integrated circuit which exists at the particular step being disclosed. The instant top surface may change from step to step in the formation of the integrated circuit.

FIG. 1A and FIG. 1B are cross sections of an example integrated circuit containing graphitic vias according to an embodiment of the invention. Referring to FIG. 1A, the integrated circuit **100** includes a substrate **102** comprising a semiconductor material **104**. The semiconductor material **104** may be a type IV semiconductor such as silicon, silicon germanium or silicon carbide. Other semiconductor materials are within the scope of the instant example. The integrated circuit **100** further includes an interconnect region **106** disposed above the substrate **102**. Active components **108** of the integrated circuit **100**, depicted in FIG. 1A as metal oxide semiconductor (MOS) transistors, are disposed in the integrated circuit **100**. Other manifestations of the active components **108**, such as bipolar junction transistors, junction field effect transistors (JFETs), and silicon controlled rectifiers (SCRs) are within the scope of the instant example. The active components **108** may be laterally separated by field oxide **112** disposed proximate to a boundary **110** between the substrate **102** and the interconnect region **106**. The field oxide **112** may have, for example, a



shallow trench isolation (STI) structure as depicted in FIG. 1A, or may have a localized oxidation of silicon (LOCOS) structure. Metal silicide **114** may be disposed on contact regions of the active components **108**. The metal silicide **114** may include nickel silicide, cobalt silicide, titanium silicide, or the like.

The interconnect region **106** includes a plurality of dielectric layers, disposed in a dielectric layer stack. In the instant example, the plurality of dielectric layers includes a pre-metal dielectric (PMD) layer **116** disposed over the substrate **102**. The PMD layer **116** may include, for example, a conformal liner of silicon nitride, a main layer of boron phosphorus silicate glass (BPSG) and a cap layer of silicon nitride or silicon carbide.

The plurality of dielectric layers of the instant example further includes a first intra-metal dielectric (IMD) layer **118** disposed over the PMD layer **116**. The first IMD layer **118** may include, for example, an etch stop layer of silicon nitride, silicon oxynitride, or silicon carbide, a main layer of silicon dioxide or BPSG, and a cap layer of silicon nitride or silicon carbide.

The plurality of dielectric layers of the instant example further includes a first inter-level dielectric (ILD) layer **120** disposed over the first IMD layer **118**. The first ILD layer **120** may include, for example, an etch stop layer, a main layer of low-k dielectric material such as organo-silicate glass (OSG), and a cap layer of silicon nitride and/or silicon carbide.

The plurality of dielectric layers of the instant example further includes a second IMD layer **122** disposed over the first ILD layer **120**, a second ILD layer **124** disposed over the second IMD layer **122**, a third IMD layer **126** disposed over the second ILD layer **124**, and a third ILD layer **128** disposed over the third IMD layer **126**.

The interconnect region **106** of the instant example includes a plurality of first interconnects **130** in a first interconnect level **132**. The first interconnects **130** are disposed between the PMD layer **116** and the first ILD layer **120**, and are laterally surrounded by the first IMD layer **118**. The first interconnects **130** may include aluminum interconnects, damascene copper interconnects, and/or plated copper interconnects. An aluminum interconnect may include an aluminum layer with a few percent silicon, titanium, and/or copper, possibly on an adhesion layer comprising titanium, and possibly with an anti-reflection layer of titanium nitride on the aluminum layer. A damascene copper interconnect may include copper on a barrier layer of tantalum and/or tantalum nitride, disposed in a trench in the first IMD layer **118**. A plated copper interconnect may include an adhesion layer at a bottom of the interconnect, and may have a barrier layer disposed on the sides of the interconnect.

The interconnect region **106** of the instant example includes a plurality of second interconnects **134** in a second interconnect level **136**. The second interconnects **134** are disposed between the first ILD layer **120** and the second ILD layer **124**, and are laterally surrounded by the second IMD layer **122**. The second interconnects **134** may include aluminum interconnects, damascene copper interconnects, and/or plated copper interconnects, and may have similar structures to the first interconnects **130**. The interconnect region **106** of the instant example further includes a plurality of third interconnects **138** in a third interconnect level **140**. The third interconnects **138** are disposed between the second ILD layer **124** and the third ILD layer **128**, and are laterally surrounded by the third IMD layer **126**. The third interconnects **138** may include aluminum interconnects, dama-

scene copper interconnects, and/or plated copper interconnects, and may have similar structures to the second interconnects **134**.

The integrated circuit **100** includes graphitic vias in the interconnect region **106**. Each graphitic via is electrically conductive. In the instant example, a plurality of first graphitic vias **142** is disposed in the PMD layer **116**. The first graphitic vias **142** extend vertically from the metal silicide **114** to the first interconnects **130** and thus provide electrical connections between the first interconnects **130** and the active components **108**. The first graphitic vias **142** may have a range of widths, as indicated in FIG. 1A. For example, one of the first graphitic vias **142** may have a width at least two times greater than a width of another of the first graphitic vias **142**. Instances of the first graphitic vias **142** with greater widths provide lower electrical resistance between the corresponding metal silicide **114** and first interconnect **130**, which may be advantageous for operation at higher currents. Instances of the first graphitic vias **142** with lesser widths enable the corresponding active component **108** to occupy a lower area, which may advantageously reduce fabrication cost of the integrated circuit **100**. The width of each of the first graphitic vias **142** may be selected to attain a desired balance between electrical resistance and component area. Conventional tungsten contacts are typically limited to one width, due to difficulty of concurrently fabricating tungsten contacts with a range of widths.

Also in the instant example, a plurality of second graphitic vias **144** is disposed in the first ILD layer **120**. The second graphitic vias **144** extend vertically from the first interconnects **130** to the second interconnects **134** and thus provide electrical connections between the first interconnects **130** and the second interconnects **134**. The second graphitic vias **144** may have a range of widths, as indicated in FIG. 1A, accruing similar advantages as described for the range of widths of first graphitic vias **142**. Conventional tungsten vias and conventional copper vias are typically limited to one width, due to difficulty of concurrently fabricating tungsten or copper vias with a range of widths.

Furthermore in the instant example, a plurality of third graphitic vias **146** is disposed in the second ILD layer **124**. The third graphitic vias **146** extend vertically from the second interconnects **134** to the third interconnects **138** and thus provide electrical connections between the second interconnects **134** and the third interconnects **138**. The third graphitic vias **146** may have a range of widths, as indicated in FIG. 1A, accruing similar advantages as described for the range of widths of first graphitic vias **142**.

Each of the first graphitic vias **142**, the second graphitic vias **144**, and the third graphitic vias **146** has a structure which is exemplified in FIG. 1B. Referring to FIG. 1B, the graphitic via **148** may correspond to one of the first graphitic vias **142**, one of the second graphitic vias **144**, or one of the third graphitic vias **146**. The graphitic via **148** includes a cohered nanoparticle film **150** which includes primarily nanoparticles **152**. Adjacent nanoparticles **152** in the cohered nanoparticle film **150** cohere to each other. The cohered nanoparticle film **150** is substantially free of an organic binder material such as adhesive or polymer. The nanoparticles **152** include one or more metals suitable for catalyzing formation of graphitic material, for example, copper, nickel, palladium, platinum, iridium, rhodium, cerium, osmium, molybdenum, and/or gold. The graphitic via **148** also includes a layer of graphitic material **154** disposed on the cohered nanoparticle film **150**. The graphitic material **154** may include, for example, graphite, graphitic carbon, graphene, and/or carbon nanotubes. The cohered



nanoparticle film **150** is disposed on, and makes electrical contact to, a lower electrically conductive member **156**. An upper electrically conductive member **158** is disposed on, and makes electrical contact to, the graphitic material **154**. The graphitic via **148** is laterally surrounded by a dielectric layer **160**. For the case wherein the graphitic via **148** corresponds to one of the first graphitic vias **142**, the lower electrically conductive member **156** corresponds to the metal silicide **114**, the upper electrically conductive member **158** corresponds to one of the first interconnects **130**, and the dielectric layer **160** corresponds to the PMD layer **116**. For the case wherein the graphitic via **148** corresponds to one of the second graphitic vias **144**, the lower electrically conductive member **156** corresponds to one of the first interconnects **130**, the upper electrically conductive member **158** corresponds to one of the second interconnects **134**, and the dielectric layer **160** corresponds to the first ILD layer **120**. For the case wherein the graphitic via **148** corresponds to one of the third graphitic vias **146**, the lower electrically conductive member **156** corresponds to one of the second interconnects **134**, the upper electrically conductive member **158** corresponds to one of the third interconnects **138**, and the dielectric layer **160** corresponds to the second ILD layer **124**. The graphitic vias **142**, **144** and **146** may provide lower resistance and greater reliability than conventional contacts and vias.

FIG. 2A and FIG. 2B are cross sections of another example integrated circuit containing a graphitic via according to an embodiment of the invention. Referring to FIG. 2A, the integrated circuit **200** includes a substrate, not shown, and active components, also not shown. The substrate and active components may be similar to those described in reference to FIG. 1A. In the instant example, the integrated circuit **200** includes an inductor **262** in an interconnect region disposed above the substrate. The inductor **262** includes a lower winding **264** and an upper winding **266**, disposed above the lower winding **264**, to attain a desired inductance. The lower winding **264** includes electrically conductive material, such as aluminum or copper. The lower winding **264** may be part of a lower interconnect level of the interconnect region. The lower winding **264** may be laterally surrounded by a lower IMD layer, not shown in FIG. 2A. The upper winding **266** includes electrically conductive material. The upper winding **266** may be part of an upper interconnect level of the interconnect region, and may be laterally surrounded by an upper IMD layer, not shown in FIG. 2A. The upper winding **266** is vertically separated from the lower winding **264**, for example by an ILD layer, not shown in FIG. 2A. The lower IMD layer, the upper IMD layer, and the ILD layer may have compositions and structures as described in reference to FIG. 1A, for example. The inductor **262** may possibly be part of a transformer, or other electromagnetic component.

The inductor **262** further includes a graphitic via **268** which extends vertically from the lower winding **264** to the upper winding **266**. The graphitic via **268** is electrically conductive and thus provides an electrical connection between the lower winding **264** and the upper winding **266**. The graphitic via **268** may have a width comparable to a width of the lower winding **264** and/or a width of the upper winding **266**, as depicted in FIG. 2A. The graphitic via **268** may have a length **267** at least two times greater than its width **269** as depicted in FIG. 2A, which may advantageously provide a desired low value of electrical resistance between the lower winding **264** and the upper winding **266**.

Conventional tungsten or copper vias typically cannot be fabricated with arbitrary lengths and widths, due to limited process latitude.

FIG. 2B is a cross section of the graphitic via **268**. The graphitic via **268** includes a cohered nanoparticle film **250** which extends along a bottom and up sides of the graphitic via **268**. The cohered nanoparticle film **250** includes primarily nanoparticles **252**. Adjacent nanoparticles **252** cohere to each other. The nanoparticles **252** include one or more metals appropriate for catalysis of graphitic material, for example as described in reference to FIG. 1B. The cohered nanoparticle film **250** is substantially free of an organic binder material.

The graphitic via **268** also includes a layer of graphitic material **254** disposed on the cohered nanoparticle film **250**. The graphitic material **254** may include one or more of the example materials disclosed in reference to FIG. 1B. The cohered nanoparticle film **250** is disposed on, and makes electrical contact to, the lower winding **264**. The upper winding **266** is disposed on, and makes electrical contact to, the graphitic material **254**, and possibly the cohered nanoparticle film **250** as indicated in FIG. 2B. The graphitic via **268** is laterally surrounded by a first dielectric layer **260**, for example the ILD layer discussed in reference to FIG. 2A. The lower winding **264** is laterally surrounded by a second dielectric layer **270**, which may be the lower IMD layer discussed in reference to FIG. 2A. The upper winding **266** is laterally surrounded by a third dielectric layer **272**, which may be the upper IMD layer discussed in reference to FIG. 2A.

FIG. 3A through FIG. 3E depict an example method of forming an integrated circuit with graphitic vias according to an embodiment of the invention. Referring to FIG. 3A, the integrated circuit **300** includes a substrate and active components, not shown in FIG. 3A. The substrate and active components may be similar to those disclosed in reference to FIG. 1A. The integrated circuit **300** includes an interconnect region **306** formed over the substrate. The interconnect region **306** is shown in FIG. 3A through FIG. 3E in stages of partial completion. Lower conductive members **356** are formed as part of the integrated circuit **300**. The lower conductive members **356** may be, for example, nodes of the active components, metal silicide local interconnects on the substrate, or interconnects in the interconnect region. The lower conductive members **356** are laterally surrounded by a first dielectric layer **370**. The first dielectric layer **370** may be, for example, field oxide or an IMD layer.

A second dielectric layer **360** is formed over the lower conductive members **356** and the first dielectric layer **370**. The second dielectric layer **360** may include a plurality of sub-layers, for example, an etch stop layer, a main layer and a cap layer. Each sub-layer of the second dielectric layer **360** may be formed, for example, by a chemical vapor deposition (CVD) process, atmospheric pressure chemical vapor deposition (APCVD) process, a low pressure chemical vapor deposition (LPCVD) process, or a plasma enhanced chemical vapor deposition (PECVD) process. The second dielectric layer **360** may be, for example, a PMD layer or an ILD layer.

Via holes **374** are formed through the second dielectric layer **360** in areas for the graphitic vias. The lower conductive members **356** are partly exposed by the via holes **374**, as depicted in FIG. 3A. The via holes **374** may be formed by forming a mask over the second dielectric layer **360** which exposes areas for the via holes, and subsequently removing dielectric material from the second dielectric layer **360** by an



etch process, such as a reactive ion etch (RIE) process. The mask may be subsequently removed.

Referring to FIG. 3B, nanoparticle ink films 376 are formed by dispensing a nanoparticle ink 378 by an additive process 380 into the via holes 374. For the purposes of this disclosure, an additive process may be understood to dispose the nanoparticles in a desired area and not dispose the nanoparticles outside of the desired area, so that it is not necessary to remove a portion of the dispensed nanoparticles to produce a final desired configuration of the nanoparticles. Additive processes may enable forming films in desired areas without photolithographic processes and subsequent etch processes, thus advantageously reducing fabrication cost and complexity. The additive process 380 may use a discrete droplet dispensing apparatus 381, as indicated in FIG. 3B, such as an ink jet apparatus. Other manifestations of the additive process 380, such as a continuous extrusion process, a direct laser transfer process, an electrostatic deposition process, or an electrochemical deposition process, are within the scope of the instant example. The nanoparticle ink films 376 are disposed at bottoms of the via holes 374 as depicted in FIG. 3B, contacting the lower conductive members 356. The nanoparticle ink 378 includes the nanoparticles and a carrier fluid. The nanoparticle ink 378 may be, for example, an ink, a slurry, or a sol gel. The nanoparticles include metals appropriate for subsequent catalysis of graphitic material, for example the metals described in reference to FIG. 1B. There may be inorganic functional molecules, for example silane-based molecules which include silicon and oxygen, on surfaces of the nanoparticles. The nanoparticle ink 378 is dispensed into the via holes 374, and is not dispensed over a top surface of the second dielectric layer 360. The integrated circuit 300 and the dispensing apparatus 381 may be configured to move laterally with respect to each other to provide a desired dispensing pattern for the nanoparticle ink films 376.

Referring to FIG. 3C, the nanoparticle ink films 376 of FIG. 3B are heated by a bake process 382 to remove at least a portion of a volatile material from the nanoparticle ink films 376 to form a nanoparticle film 384 which includes primarily nanoparticles. The bake process 382 may be a radiant heat process using, for example infrared light emitting diodes (IR LEDs) 383, as indicated schematically in FIG. 3C. Using IR LEDs 383 in a scanned system may enable applying the radiant heat to substantially heat only the nanoparticle ink films 376 while not applying the radiant heat to areas of the integrated circuit 300 outside of the nanoparticle ink films 376, advantageously reducing a heat load on the components of the integrated circuit 300. Alternatively, the bake process 382 may use another radiant heat source such as an incandescent lamp, or may be a hot plate process which heats the nanoparticle ink films 376 through the substrate of the integrated circuit 300. The bake process 382 may be performed in a partial vacuum, or in an ambient with a continuous flow of gas at low pressure, to enhance removal of the volatile material.

Referring to FIG. 3D, the nanoparticle film 384 of FIG. 3C is heated by a first cohesion inducing process 386 so that adjacent nanoparticles cohere to each other, to form a cohered nanoparticle film 352 in the via holes 374. The temperature required for the nanoparticles to cohere to each other is a function of the size of the nanoparticles. Smaller nanoparticles may be heated at lower temperatures than larger nanoparticles to attain a desired cohesion of the nanoparticles. The nanoparticles may be selected to enable cohesion at a temperature compatible with the integrated circuit components and structures. Cohesion may occur by

a process that includes a physical mechanism involving diffusion of atoms between the adjacent nanoparticles. Cohesion may also occur by a process that includes a chemical mechanism involving reaction of atoms and/or molecules between the adjacent nanoparticles. The first cohesion inducing process 386 may include a scanned laser heating process, which provides radiant energy from a scanned laser apparatus 387 as depicted in FIG. 3D. The scanned laser apparatus 387 may be configured to apply heat to the nanoparticle film 384 and avoid applying heat to areas outside the nanoparticle film 384, thus advantageously reducing a heat load on the integrated circuit 300. In one alternative to the spike anneal process, the nanoparticle film 384 may be annealed by a spike anneal process, which provides radiant energy from an incandescent light source, for a time period of 100 milliseconds to 5 seconds, across the existing top surface of the integrated circuit 300. In another alternative to the spike anneal process, the nanoparticle film 384 may be annealed by a flash anneal process, which provides radiant energy, commonly from a laser or flash-lamp, for a time period of 1 microsecond to 10 microseconds, across the existing top surface of the integrated circuit 300. The cohered nanoparticle film 352 is electrically conductive.

Referring to FIG. 3E, a graphitic material 354 is selectively formed in the via holes 374 on the cohered nanoparticle film 352 by a graphitic material PECVD process. In the graphitic material PECVD process, the integrated circuit 300 is heated, for example to a temperature of 200° C. to 400° C. A carbon-containing reagent gas, denoted in FIG. 3E as "CARBON REAGENT GAS" is flowed over the integrated circuit 300. The carbon-containing reagent gas may include, for example, methane, straight chain alkanes such as ethane, propane and/or butane, alcohols such as ethanol, and/or cyclic hydrocarbons such as cyclobutane or benzene. Radio frequency (RF) power, denoted in FIG. 3E as "RF POWER" is applied to the carbon-containing reagent gas to generate carbon radicals above the integrated circuit 300. The metal in the cohered nanoparticle film 352 catalyzes the carbon radicals to react to form a first layer of the graphitic material 354 selectively on the cohered nanoparticle film 352. Subsequent layers of the graphitic material 354 are formed selectively on the previously formed layers of graphitic material 354, so that the graphitic material 354 is formed in the via holes 374, and graphitic material is not formed elsewhere on the integrated circuit 300. The graphitic material 354 is electrically conductive. A combination of the cohered nanoparticle film 352 and the graphitic material 354 provide the graphitic vias 348. Fabrication of the integrated circuit 300 is continued with forming upper conductors, not shown, over the graphitic vias 348, so that the graphitic vias 348 provide electrical connections between the upper conductors and the lower conductive members 356.

FIG. 4A through FIG. 4D depict another example method of forming an integrated circuit with graphitic vias according to an embodiment of the invention. Referring to FIG. 4A, the integrated circuit 400 includes a substrate and active components, not shown in FIG. 4A. The substrate and active components may be similar to those disclosed in reference to FIG. 1A. The integrated circuit 400 includes an interconnect region 406 formed over the substrate. The interconnect region 406 is shown in FIG. 4A through FIG. 4D in stages of partial completion. Lower conductive members 456 are formed as part of the integrated circuit 400. The lower conductive members 456 are laterally surrounded by a first dielectric layer 470. A second dielectric layer 460 is formed



over the lower conductive members **456** and the first dielectric layer **470**. Via holes **474** are formed through the second dielectric layer **460** in areas for the graphitic vias. The lower conductive members **456** are partly exposed by the via holes **474**, as depicted in FIG. 4A.

Referring to FIG. 4B, a nanoparticle ink **478** is dispensed into the via holes **474** by an additive process **480** to form a nanoparticle ink film **476** on bottoms and sides of the via holes **474**, as depicted in FIG. 4B. The nanoparticle ink **478** includes nanoparticles which include one or more metals suitable for catalysis of graphitic material. The additive process **480** may use an electrostatic deposition apparatus **481** as depicted schematically in FIG. 4B. Other manifestations of the additive process **480** are within the scope of the instant example. The nanoparticle ink film **476** is substantially free of an organic binder material.

Referring to FIG. 4C, the nanoparticle ink film **476** of FIG. 4B is heated in two stages by a combination heating process **486**. The first heating stage of the combination heating process **486** heats the nanoparticle ink film **476** to remove a volatile material, to form a nanoparticle film which include primarily nanoparticles. The second stage of the combination heating process **486** heats the nanoparticle film to induce cohesion between the nanoparticles, to form a cohered nanoparticle film **450**. The combination heating process **486** may use an incandescent light source **487** as depicted schematically in FIG. 4C. Using the combination heating process **486** may advantageously reduce fabrication time and fabrication cost for the integrated circuit **400** compared to using separate heating processes. The cohered nanoparticle film **450** is electrically conductive.

Referring to FIG. 4D, a graphitic material **454** is selectively formed in the via holes **474** on the cohered nanoparticle film **450** by a carbon PECVD process, for example as described in reference to FIG. 3E. In the carbon PECVD process, the integrated circuit **400** is heated. A carbon-containing reagent gas, denoted in FIG. 4D as "CARBON REAGENT GAS" is flowed over the integrated circuit **400** and RF power, denoted in FIG. 4D as "RF POWER" is applied to the carbon-containing reagent gas to generate carbon radicals above the integrated circuit **400**. The metal in the nanoparticles of the cohered nanoparticle film **450** catalyzes the carbon radicals to react to form a first layer of the graphitic material **454** selectively on the cohered nanoparticle film **450**. Subsequent layers of the graphitic material **454** are formed selectively on the previously formed layers of graphitic material **454**, so that the graphitic material **454** is formed in the via holes **474**, and graphitic material is not formed elsewhere on the integrated circuit **400**. A combination of the cohered nanoparticle film **450** and the graphitic material **454** provide the graphitic vias **448**. Fabrication of the integrated circuit **400** is continued with forming upper conductors, not shown, over the graphitic vias **448**, so that the graphitic vias **448** provide electrical connections between the upper conductors and the lower conductive members **456**.

FIG. 5A through FIG. 5I depict a further example method of forming an integrated circuit with graphitic vias according to an embodiment of the invention. Referring to FIG. 5A, the integrated circuit **500** includes a substrate and active components, not shown in FIG. 5A. The integrated circuit **500** includes an interconnect region **506** formed over the substrate. The interconnect region **506** is shown in FIG. 5A through FIG. 5I in stages of partial completion. Lower conductive members **556** are formed as part of the integrated circuit **500**. The lower conductive members **556** are laterally surrounded by a first dielectric layer **570**.

Referring to FIG. 5B, nanoparticle ink films **576** are formed on the lower conductive members **556** by an additive process **580**. The nanoparticle ink films **576** include nanoparticles which contain one or more metals appropriate for catalysis of graphitic material. The additive process **580** may be an electrochemical deposition process, as depicted in FIG. 5B, with a main electrode **588** which dispenses nanoparticle ink, and a counter electrode **590**. The nanoparticle ink is electrically charged and transferred from the main electrode **588** through a dielectric fluid **592** to the integrated circuit **500** by applying a voltage differential between the main electrode **588** and the counter electrode **590**. The nanoparticle ink films **576** may be laterally recessed from edges of the lower conductive members **556** as depicted in FIG. 5B, may be substantially coincident with the edges of the lower conductive members **556**, or may extend onto the first dielectric layer **570**, or any combination thereof. The additive process may alternatively be a discrete dispensing process, a continuous extrusion process, a direct laser transfer process, or an electrostatic deposition process.

Referring to FIG. 5C, the nanoparticle ink films **576** of FIG. 5B may be heated by a bake process **582** to remove a volatile material from the nanoparticle ink films **576**, to form nanoparticle films **584**. The nanoparticle films **584** include primarily nanoparticles. The bake process **582** may be a radiant heat process using an incandescent lamp **583** as indicated schematically in FIG. 5C. As an alternative, the bake process **582** may be a hot plate process.

Referring to FIG. 5D, adjacent nanoparticles in the nanoparticle films **584** of FIG. 5C are induced to cohere by a cohesion inducing process **586** to form cohered nanoparticle films **552**. The cohesion inducing process **586** may induce the nanoparticles to cohere, for example, by heating the nanoparticle films **584** in a flash heating process using a flash lamp **587** as depicted schematically in FIG. 5D. Other methods of inducing nanoparticles to cohere are within the scope of the instant example. The cohered nanoparticle films **552** are electrically conductive.

Referring to FIG. 5E, layers of graphitic material **554** are selectively formed on the cohered nanoparticle films **552** by a carbon PECVD process, for example as described in reference to FIG. 3E, by heating the integrated circuit **500**, flowing a carbon-containing reagent gas, denoted in FIG. 5E as "CARBON REAGENT GAS" over the integrated circuit **500** and applying RF power, denoted in FIG. 5E as "RF POWER" to the carbon-containing reagent gas. The metal in the nanoparticles of the cohered nanoparticle film **552** catalyzes carbon radicals produced by the carbon-containing reagent gas under application of the RF power to react to form a first layer of the graphitic material **554** selectively on the cohered nanoparticle film **552**. In the instant example, no substantial amount of the first layer of the graphitic material is formed on the integrated circuit **500** outside of the cohered nanoparticle film **552**. Subsequent layers of the graphitic material **554** are formed selectively on the previously formed layers of graphitic material **554**, so that the graphitic material **554** is formed on the cohered nanoparticle film **552**, and graphitic material is not formed elsewhere on the integrated circuit **500**. A combination of the cohered nanoparticle film **552** and the graphitic material **554** provide the graphitic vias **548**.

Referring to FIG. 5F, a second dielectric layer **560** is formed over the graphitic vias **548** and over the first dielectric layer **570**. In the instant example, the second dielectric layer **560** has a thickness sufficient to form damascene interconnects above the graphitic vias **548**. The second dielectric layer **560** may include a main layer of a silicon



dioxide-based material formed by a PECVD process using tetraethyl orthosilicate (TEOS). The second dielectric layer **560** may also include an etch stop layer and/or a cap layer. Other compositions and layer structures of the second dielectric layer **560** are within the scope of the instant example. The second dielectric layer **560** may be at least partially conformal, so that a topography of a top surface of the second dielectric layer **560** corresponds to the graphitic vias **548**, as depicted in FIG. 5F.

Referring to FIG. 5G, the second dielectric layer **560** may be planarized, for example by an oxide chemical mechanical polish (CMP) process or a resist etchback (REB) process. In the instant example, the planarized second dielectric layer **560** covers the graphitic vias **548** with sufficient dielectric material to form damascene interconnects above the graphitic vias **548**.

Referring to FIG. 5H, interconnect trenches **594** are formed in the second dielectric layer **560**. One or more of the interconnect trenches **594** may expose one or more of the graphitic vias **548**, as depicted in FIG. 5H. The interconnect trenches **594** may be formed, for example, by a timed etch process.

Referring to FIG. 5I, damascene interconnects **596** are formed in the interconnect trenches **594**. One or more of the damascene interconnects **596** may contact one or more of the graphitic vias **548**, as depicted in FIG. 5I. The damascene interconnects **596** may include a metal liner **597** formed on bottoms and sidewalls of the interconnect trenches **594**, and fill metal **598** formed on the metal liner **597**. In one manifestation of the instant example, the metal liner **597** may include tantalum and/or tantalum nitride, and the fill metal **598** may include copper. Forming the graphitic vias **548** to extend vertically above the first dielectric layer **570**, and subsequently forming the second dielectric layer **560** over the graphitic vias **548** may facilitate integration of the graphitic vias **548** into fabrication sequences using damascene interconnects, thus advantageously reducing a fabrication cost of the integrated circuit **500**.

FIG. 6 is a cross section of an example integrated circuit which includes a combined thermal routing structure according to an embodiment of the invention. The integrated circuit **600** includes a substrate **602** comprising a semiconductor material **604**. The integrated circuit **600** further includes an interconnect region **606** disposed above the substrate **602**. Active components **608** are disposed in the substrate **602** and the interconnect region **606**, at a boundary **610** between the substrate **602** and the interconnect region **606**. The active components **608** may be, for example, MOS transistors, bipolar junction transistors, JFETs, and/or SCRs. The active components **608** may be laterally separated by field oxide **612** at the boundary **610** between the substrate **602** and the interconnect region **606**.

The interconnect region **606** may include contacts **700**, interconnects **702** and vias **704** disposed in a dielectric layer stack **706**. Some of the interconnects **702** are disposed in a top interconnect level **708** which is located at a top surface **710** of the interconnect region **606**. The top surface **710** of the interconnect region **606** is located at a surface of the interconnect region **606** opposite from the boundary **610** between the substrate **602** and the interconnect region **606**. Bond pad structures **712** may be disposed over the top surface **710**, and are electrically coupled to the interconnects **702** in the top interconnect level **708**. A protective overcoat **714** is disposed over the top surface **710** of the interconnect region **606**. In the instant example, the integrated circuit **600** may be assembled using wire bonds **716** on some of the bond pad structures **712**. The integrated circuit **600** is

packaged by encapsulation in an encapsulation material **718**. The encapsulation material **718**, which may be an epoxy for example, is disposed over the protective overcoat **714** and the bond pad structures **712**.

The integrated circuit **600** of the instant example includes the combined thermal routing structure **720**, which extends from inside the substrate **602** through the interconnect region **606**, and through the organic polymer encapsulation material **718**. The combined thermal routing structure **720** may conduct heat generated by the components **608** to a heat removal apparatus, such as a heat sink, not shown in FIG. 6, located outside of a package containing the integrated circuit **600**, which may advantageously reduce an operating temperature of the components **608**. The combined thermal routing structure **720** includes a plurality of graphitic vias **648** disposed in the interconnect region **606** according to any of the examples disclosed herein.

The combined thermal routing structure **720** may include a thermal routing trench **722** disposed in the substrate **602**. The thermal routing trench **722** may surround a portion of the components **608** and may be connected to each other at locations out of the plane of FIG. 6. The thermal routing trench **722** may have a structure and may be formed, for example, as described in the commonly assigned patent application having patent application Ser. No. 15/361,397, filed simultaneously with this application, and which is incorporated herein by reference.

The combined thermal routing structure **720** may include an interconnect region thermal routing structure **724** disposed in the interconnect region **606**. The interconnect region thermal routing structure **724** may surround a portion of the components **608** and may be connected to each other at locations out of the plane of FIG. 6. The interconnect region thermal routing structure **724** may have a structure and may be formed, for example, as described in the commonly assigned patent application having patent application Ser. No. 15/361,394, filed simultaneously with this application, and which is incorporated herein by reference.

The combined thermal routing structure **720** may include a top level thermal conductivity structure **726** disposed above the top interconnect level **708**. The top level thermal conductivity structure **726** may have a structure and may be formed, for example, as described in the commonly assigned patent application having patent application Ser. No. 15/361,390, filed simultaneously with this application, and which is incorporated herein by reference.

The combined thermal routing structure **720** may include high thermal conductivity vias **728** disposed in the interconnect region **606**. The high thermal conductivity vias **728** may have structures and may be formed, for example, as described in the commonly assigned patent application having patent application Ser. No. 15/361,399, filed simultaneously with this application, and which is incorporated herein by reference.

The combined thermal routing structure **720** may include high thermal conductivity through-package conduits **730** disposed through the encapsulation material **718** to the integrated circuit **600**. The high thermal conductivity through-package conduits **730** may have structures and may be formed, for example, as described in the commonly assigned patent application having patent application Ser. No. 15/361,403, filed simultaneously with this application, and which is incorporated herein by reference.

While various embodiments of the present invention have been described above, it should be understood that they have been presented by way of example only and not limitation. Numerous changes to the disclosed embodiments can be



made in accordance with the disclosure herein without departing from the spirit or scope of the invention. Thus, the breadth and scope of the present invention should not be limited by any of the above described embodiments. Rather, the scope of the invention should be defined in accordance with the following claims and their equivalents.

What is claimed is:

1. A method of forming an integrated circuit, comprising:
  - forming an interconnect region above a semiconductor substrate;
  - forming a first electrically conductive member within the interconnect region;
  - forming a graphitic via in the interconnect region, wherein forming the graphitic via comprises:
    - dispensing a nanoparticle ink by an additive process to form a nanoparticle ink film, wherein:
      - the nanoparticle ink film comprises nanoparticles and a carrier fluid; and
      - the nanoparticles comprise a metal suitable for catalysis of graphitic material;
    - inducing cohesion of the nanoparticles to form a cohered nanoparticle film on at least one sidewall of the graphitic via, wherein the cohered nanoparticle film makes electrical contact to the first electrically conductive member in the interconnect region; and
    - forming a layer of graphitic material on the cohered nanoparticle film; and
  - forming a second electrically conductive member in the interconnect region, wherein the second electrically conductive member makes electrical contact to the cohered nanoparticle film and to the layer of graphitic material.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein forming the graphitic via further comprises heating the nanoparticle ink film to remove a volatile material from the nanoparticle ink film to form a nanoparticle film, prior to inducing cohesion of the nanoparticles.
3. The method of claim 2, wherein heating the nanoparticle ink film comprises applying radiant energy from a radiant light source.
4. The method of claim 1, wherein forming the graphitic via further comprises forming a via hole in a dielectric layer of the interconnect region, prior to forming the nanoparticle ink film, wherein the nanoparticle ink film is formed in the via hole, and wherein the graphitic material is formed in the via hole.
5. The method of claim 1, wherein forming the interconnect region further comprises:
  - forming a dielectric layer over the graphitic via, wherein the dielectric layer contacts sides of the graphitic via; and
  - planarizing the dielectric layer.
6. The method of claim 5, further comprising forming the second electrically conductive member in a trench in the dielectric layer.
7. The method of claim 1, wherein the nanoparticles comprise a metal selected from the group consisting of copper, nickel, palladium, platinum, iridium, rhodium, cerium, osmium, molybdenum, and gold.
8. The method of claim 1, wherein the graphitic material comprises a material selected from the group consisting of graphite, graphitic carbon, graphene, and carbon nanotubes.
9. The method of claim 1, wherein the additive process comprises a process selected from the group consisting of a discrete droplet dispensing process, a continuous extrusion

process, a direct laser transfer process, an electrostatic deposition process, and an electrochemical deposition process.

10. The method of claim 1, wherein inducing cohesion of the nanoparticles comprises a process selected from the group consisting of a scanned laser heating process, a flash heating process and a spike heating process.

11. The method of claim 1, wherein the cohered nanoparticle film is essentially free of an organic binder material.

12. The method of claim 1, wherein the first electrically conductive member is electrically coupled to the active component.

13. The method of claim 1, wherein forming the layer of graphitic material comprises forming the layer of graphitic material on the cohered nanoparticle film by a plasma enhanced chemical vapor deposition (PECVD) process.

14. A method of forming an integrated circuit, comprising:

forming first and second dielectric layers over a semiconductor substrate;

forming a first metal interconnect line within a first dielectric layer and located over the substrate;

forming a second metal interconnect line within a second dielectric layer and located over the substrate;

forming a conductive via comprising a graphitic material within a third dielectric layer located between the first and second dielectric layers; and

forming a cohered nanoparticle film located between the graphitic material and the first metal interconnect line and between the graphitic material and the third dielectric layer.

15. The method of claim 14, wherein the nanoparticle film comprises a metal selected from the group consisting of copper, nickel, palladium, platinum, iridium, rhodium, cerium, osmium, molybdenum, and gold.

16. The method of claim 14, wherein the graphitic material comprises a plurality of graphene layers.

17. The method of claim 14, wherein adjacent nanoparticles in the nanoparticle film are cohered to each other.

18. The method of claim 14, wherein the graphitic material comprises a material selected from the group consisting of graphite, graphitic carbon, graphene, and carbon nanotubes.

19. A method of forming an integrated circuit, comprising:

forming first and second dielectric layers over a semiconductor substrate;

forming a first metal interconnect line within a first dielectric layer and located over the substrate;

forming a second metal interconnect line within a second dielectric layer and located over the substrate;

forming a conductive via comprising a graphitic material within a third dielectric layer located between the first and second dielectric layers;

forming a nanoparticle film located between the graphitic material and the first metal interconnect line and between the graphitic material and the third dielectric layer; and

forming a graphitic via in the interconnect region, wherein forming the graphitic via comprises dispensing a nanoparticle ink by an additive process to form a nanoparticle ink film, wherein the nanoparticle ink film comprises nanoparticles and a carrier fluid, and the nanoparticles comprise a metal suitable for catalysis of graphitic material.

20. The method of claim 19, wherein the additive process comprises a process selected from the group consisting of a

discrete droplet dispensing, process, a continuous extrusion process, a direct laser transfer process, an electrostatic deposition process, and an electrochemical deposition process.

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